Pioneers of Alienation and 50s Sci-Fi at Thing Street Asylum

by

Jon Thomas Rowland

PIONEERS OF ALIENATION

A Mind That Lost Itself
A Virtual History

There are now 102 insane persons, former residents of Toronto, in this house, and to this number must be added those belonging to Toronto now in the London and Rockwood Asylum. To those who form their judgment of facts solely on figures, no further proof would be necessary to warrant the assertion that Toronto is the maddest hole in all Canada, if not in all the world. This year it has sent in more than one-fifth of all admitted .... (Dr. Joseph Workman, Annual Report of the Medical Superintendent, Asylum for Insane, Toronto, 1871)

A Delusional Fabrication

Pioneers of Alienation

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ISBN: 9798694865128

FOREWORD

I live in the shadow of the Toronto Asylum, in Parkdale, Toronto's great ghetto for gays, blacks, paupers, psychiatric survivors, etc. The neighbourhood begins at the overpass for the Canadian Pacific Railroad, where King and Queen Streets symbolically descend a little, so as not to interfere with the trains. Joseph Workman, Medical Superintendent 1853-1875, the "Nestor of Alienists," fretted that the steepness would cause accidents. He also wanted the structure to be aesthetically pleasing, since it was so close to "his" grounds.[1]

What marked the boundary of the Asylum, now marks the beginning of Parkdale. The patients of the Queen Street Mental Health Centre, the successor of the Toronto Asylum,[2] rent the neighbourhood's old houses and apartment buildings, more or less out-patient boarding-homes, many of them fire-traps. Workman observed that asylum treatment was at least better than an auto-da-fe;[3] occasionally it seems no different.

The following is a discussion of the writings of the patients, inmates, and principal alienists of the Toronto Asylum, circa 1840 to 1920, organized around such themes as the relationship between medical authority and authorship, the textuality of disease, and the meanings of asylum.

My principal thesis is that doctors in rather self-interested ways constructed medical authority as authors, by troping the asylum and its diseases until, thanks to the perceived failure of things like "moral therapy," and professional self-interest, they "virtually" troped it out of existence. I describe this troping in the doctors' own texts, focused on the Toronto Asylum, because of its paradigmatic, long and troubled history. In the process I have probably reversed the usual relationship of such texts to history; what are usually treated as glosses are here treated as main text.

Toronto's asylum doctors looked and gazed, but they also read and wrote. Their texts demonstrate, among other things, the persistent and even obsessive textuality of medical authority, even as they themselves protested -- too much -- that it was based on something more. These texts parallel, are affected by but also help to facilitate developments in the history of alienism and early psychiatry, from the failure of "moral therapy," through the depressing period of "custodial care," to the beginnings of clinical psychiatry, the "discovery" of dementia praecox, and the "Mental Hygiene" movement of the 1920s.

These texts describe a kind of North American "birth of the clinic," not the austere Foucauldian clinic of the 19th-century, but something related to it in its capacity to generate, however crudely but viciously, the knowledge that not only enhances its power but also disseminates it. Of this phenomenon it is appropriate to ask, as Foucault does of the 18th-century clinic, whether one can rightfully "transform into an object of clinical observation a patient whose poverty has compelled him to seek assistance" (83), or whether it is not "a tacit form of violence ... upon a sick body that demands to be comforted, not displayed" (84).[4] The latter question dogs not only C.K. Clarke's vociferations in the name of the Asylum on behalf of the clinic, but also the rhetoric of his predecessors, George Hamilton Park, Daniel Clark, and above all, of Joseph Workman, Clarke's mentor as well as predecessor. In their various arguments, in pamphlets, articles, and annual reports[5] these doctors continually

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[1] When Workman first knew of it, he anticipated a raised bridge which would have required long and expensive embankments over asylum land. Moreover, the trains "incessantly passing" underneath would be a danger to "spirited horses and cattle" (Report for 1871, 26). Finally, the bridge itself, "so near our grounds," ought to be ornamented more "than the times warrant" (26).

[2] The Provincial Lunatic Asylum officially opened on Queen Street West in 1850. In 1871 it was renamed Asylum for the Insane, Toronto. In 1907 all of the provincial asylums, including the institution on Queen Street, were renamed "Hospitals for the Insane." When in 1919 such institutions were renamed "Ontario Hospitals," the Queen Street institution became "Ontario Hospital, Toronto." The name "Queen Street Mental Health Centre" was adopted in 1966. The institution merged with the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry and various other institutions to form the Addiction and Mental Health Services Corporation in 1998. Such names describe, in a different way, the argument of the book; so does the persistent apocalyptic designation, "999," after the institution's street address (subsequently changed). For simplicity, and because it is less euphemistic, I consistently identify this institution as the "Toronto Asylum" or "the Asylum."

[3] In "Demonomania and Witchcraft," American Journal of Insanity 28 (1871): 175-93.

[4] Michel Foucault, The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception, Trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1973).

[5] For the sake of simplicity quotations from the annual reports of the medical superintendent, for the years 1853 through 1905, are referred to by year and page number. A complete series of these reports is available on microfilm at the Archives of Ontario in Toronto and most can also be found in the Archives of the Queen Street Mental Health Centre. The institution referred to simply as the Asylum officially opened at the Queen Street location in 1850 as the Provincial Lunatic Asylum. In 1871 it became the Asylum for the Insane, Toronto. In 1907 it became known as the "Hospital" for the Insane, and in 1919 it was identified as "Ontario Hosital, Toronto." I refer to it as "the Asylum" throughout this work -- a simpler and less euphemistic designation. Some of the `traffic' in Annual Reports among Asylum Superintendents is indicated in a series of letters from Workman to Dr Edward Jarvis (Superintendent of a private asylum in Dorchester, Massachusetts), preserved among the Edward Jarvis Papers in the Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine in Boston (typed transcripts of these are available at the Archives of the Queen Street Mental Health Centre in Toronto). On August 20, 1853, Workman indicates that he has sent Jarvis three back-issues of Reports concerning the `temporary asylum' which preceded the permanent institution of which he became Acting Superintendent that year. In the same letter Workman expresses his opinion that even in cases of religious madness, `there is always a predisposing cause which renders the individual liable to the malady'. He rather disingenuously flatters Jarvis as one who has `no doubt bestowed much attention to the subject of insanity', and invites the more experienced alienist to send him `at an early date, a list of the best recent authors on the subject of insanity'. On November 1, 1855, Workman acknowledges receiving from him `17 copies of your report on Idiocy and Insanity', no doubt for distribution in Canada and probably in England too. He apologizes for his slowness in sending Jarvis, in return, copies of his own latest Report, `presented to the Legislature in June 1854', which appears to have been held up at the printer's. He also expresses his satisfaction, after a convention he attended in Boston, that `my own asylum here is, in many respects, perhaps in the main, superior to any which I visited'. On December 17, 1863, Workman complains, in a letter marked `Private', that the Chairman of `an incompetent Board of Inspectors of asylums and prisons -- men pitchforked into office by political influence', one Dr Tache, has printed a report criticizing `a communication of mine to the Govt on several matters relating to this asylum'. These matters obviously included the problem of crowding, since Tache faulted Workman for accommodating fewer patients per square foot than his counterpart at the Beauport Asylum in Quebec; Tache also

display the bodies of the sick, to no good effect. Ironically, instead of the "dense and wealthy population of a metropolitan city," which the original commissioners anticipated in the 1840s would mean a steady supply of students, an ever-growing population of urban poor supply it with variously depicted "plagues" of masturbators, monomaniacs, erotomaniacs, paretics, degenerates, schizophrenics, defective immigrants, low to high-grade morons, and feeble-minded women. The doctors play fast and loose not only with these diseases but also with the poor who seem to be especially vulnerable to them, and whose diseases it is difficult if not impossible to distinguish from poverty. The diseases vary with the role of the Asylum in professional imagination, but their epidemic and endemic character remains constant.

Beginning in the 1960s historians such as Erving Goffman, Gerald Grob, David Rothman, Ellen Dwyer, Constance McGovern, Roy Porter, and Andrew Scull have narrated the origins and described the character of asylums and mental hospitals. Most of their studies have been influenced by Michel Foucault's Madness and Civilization: A History of Madness in the Age of Reason, with its idea of the "great confinement," and its systematic debunking of the "Whiggish" or naively "progressive" view of such history. The most significant of these historians, Andrew Scull, has refined and qualified his earlier Foucauldianism (arguing that the idea of the "great confinement" is itself a myth, or a development peculiar to French history), but has retained and more clearly articulated his connection of the rise of the asylum in England to the development of a market economy. He remains an eloquent critic of psychiatric "professionalism."

The following parallels these earlier histories, as in some ways it must, as a study of texts focused on an institution subject to the same economic and social forces as any other in a developing capitalist society. But it is also intended to elaborate another issue initially raised by Foucault, the absolute separation of reason and non-reason which he argues characterizes attitudes to madness in the "Age of Reason," and marks its "constitution as a mental illness" (x). The texts that form the basis of this study, because of the common affiliation of their medical authors, together comprise a peculiarly intense "monologue of reason about madness" (x-xi) which helps us to understand some of the effects on discourse of its separation from its ostensible subject. The peculiar character of these texts owes much to their being "monologues," an effect on the sane of their silencing of the mad.[6] Despite (or because of) their monologic character, these texts are also curiously lopsided, self-incriminatingly polyvalent, and embarrassingly lacunar. At the risk of further one-sidedness, I confess that I sometimes read in them the "mirror writing" of the "silenced" mad, an effect on the sane of their silencing of themselves.

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complained about the ventilation of the Toronto Asylum. Workman is openly soliciting, as he himself puts it, `authorities' (his emphasis), seven of whom he has already written. He also asks Jarvis for permission to publish his answers in his own reports, and begs him to send him copies of any annual or other reports -- `English or Irish or French bearing on the subject'. On December 14, 1863, Workman sent Jarvis a little questionnaire addressing questions of `sufficient atmospheric cubic space for an insane person' under both `an efficient system of ventilation' and `a defective system'. In another letter to Jarvis, dated September 17, 1868, Workman states that he has sent a set of his reports to Sir James Clark, along with his comments on the issue of non-restraint. Andrew Scull places Clark among the `articulate and outspoken detractors' of Victorian asylumdom; he was physician in ordinary to Queen Victoria (See Andrew Scull, The Most Solitary of Afflictions: Madness and Society in Britain 1700-1900 (New Haven: Yale UP, 1993), 318). At least on this occasion Workman seems to function as unofficial spokesman for `all the Superintendents of American Insane Hospitals', with whom he agrees that `the alternatives had recourse to in English Asylums, as witnessed by myself, are much more annoying, and most be more hurtful, both bodily and mentally, to the patients than any mechanical appliances used in America'. The contents of the reports promoted professional interests, and their dissemination opened channels for additional communication.

[6] See in particular Foucault's discussion of how the "birth of the asylum" at Samuel Tuke's "York Retreat" and Pinel's "Bicetre" facilitated not only a liberation from physical restraint but also a subtler imposition of different kinds of "self-restraint" (250-51). These kinds included constant observation or self-observation whereby the insane were no longer a spectacle for others but objects of their own self-loathing, and above all silence whereby "there was no longer any common language between madness and reason" (262).


WINNERS
WINNERS
CARLU

Thing Street Asylum

Pioneers of Alienation
Part I: Three Generation Enough

The Power Commissioner sat on the organ.

He recalled soft gloomy light from volatile swinging lamps in clearings, wicks floating in wax baths....

It had changed....
There was no twilight....
He, the Dictator, Hydro Baron, Popular Czar....
Threw the switch in his home town, saw the siding lit, the lights spring down Thing Street....
He brought light to things.....

Sir Jimmy Witless, premier of Dadania, had introduced Midas's own daughter, Marion, at the head of a delegation of wet-suited suffragettes. She wore a tiara of 40-watt light-bulbs....
On her pale devoted hands she bore a pink powder-puff in the middle of which the switch gleamed like a giant brass nipple.
William made a little speech. This hand has done worse things (only last night), than press this here nip - er, switch....

Poor Marion....
The celebrated Hydro Fairy lost her crown (and mind) in Thing Street Asylum....

She became a Zoncolite Girl....

Crones squinted as he approached. Out of habit....
They'd known his father. One had been his cook. He remembered the coffee-cake like a big pretzel, or a big turd with chicken feed on it....

He noticed at the back of the hall an old man who'd worked in his father's mill. He grasped him by the arm and dragged him into the pew with the dignitaries and parliamentarians. They shuffled together, like chickens....

He recognized the man who'd built the first log house, the first stable, etc., etc. All senile, demented idiots....

Even the fucker who'd built that ponderosa where he was born, in June, anno domini 1857....

To get home you had to cross a rotten bridge over a rancid little creek, and drive up a long lane bordered by rank cherry trees which insensibly merged into a dense jungle....

Roses grew like weeds on the arid banks of the creek. The house had a long veranda facing it, where his mother watched with a musket on her arm, like a sentry. She smiled at him and his brothers, running through the bushes, tearing clothes and flesh, screaming....
He survived to become Mayor....

In 1903 he hosted a conference of small-time Eurotrash remittance men. They discussed the viability of publicly owned and distributed electricity, from the Falls at Niagara.
But how much? The portly, bearded businessfuck.
Cheaper than anything else. The slim, clean-shaven young mayorfuck.
You think so.
Cheaper than coal....
The white coal....
The fucks imagined the rich white cum of Niagara, changed by modern electro-magneto-alchemical process to spinning turbines, to whirling lathes, to delicate phallic spindles for bedroom staircases of shady Thing Street speculators....
The fucks saw power disseminating along slender lines from the Falls, returning as money, houses, and....
Plenty of ass....
It was the alchemists' dream of transformation, the escarpment a giant philosopher's stone....
It almost made him hard....

Pioneers of Alienation

Midas remembered the palindrome....
Niagara, O roar again!
It never shut up....
Either way, power....
Such and such a volume of water, tumbling from such and such a height....
Such and such a quantity of things, spewing from The Workshops of the Nation....
So much light and noise....
Roaring light...
So many pretty things....

Always, plenty of ASS....

Midas had been appointed to a Commission whose job was plotting the distribution of this roaring, lighting power. He had been ardent for public production and distribution of Hydro....
He remembered the machinations of the capitalists who'd operated concessions at the Falls....
They called him pinko commie.
He and Jack London went down on each other.
That hurt.
That made him more determined....
They tried to allocate power only to concerns in which they had an interest. Usually hidden. They tried to ostracize everyone else, mainly manufacturers in small towns like Midas's. He became the government's champion of free enterprise. He incurred the wrath of the men whose profits he diminished, men like Mayor Sam McFee.

Now he gazed before him at the congregation of Protestant Fundamentalists. The citizens. The community. Wiry old men with short, white beards. Women like fresh produce.
Young men, sporting tan-colored coats and shiny black boots, loitered under the balcony, shaded from Hydro....
Butch....

The minister spoke of the credit he was to his father and mother, who had gone to their just reward, of the good he had done Hydro....

Dutifully he rose from the organ and thanked the minister for his kind words and hospitality at this banquet. He indicated the rows of glimmering pails, left out of habit, testimony to the dangerous light he'd made obsolete, and replaced.
He reminded the things in the church, how each of them had worked hard, how he himself had worked hard from the age of fourteen, as an apprentice in his father's foundry, making rivets for the oil works at Petrolia. He praised them for their hard-working lifestyle and honest, German values, and thanked them for his own good health and the vigorous life he enjoyed....
He could still get it up....

His wife rose to sing, Avanti Signori....
She was slender, black-haired with intense, dark eyes. Beside her, Midas looked fat. Her dress was high-waisted and full at the top but fell in ruffles that stopped, just above her shoes....

Thing Street Asylum

She had small feet, the feet of a....

Chinese Princess!

Jah Lo See!

He smiled....

He was hard.....

*****

Afterwards Midas mounted the platform to help Cosima down. How fine they looked, she in her ruffled high-waisted dress, he in his dark coat and light pants.
The young men sneered....
He shook the minister's hand. Cosima glared.

They ignored the old things waving, in the illuminated doorway....

Damned fools....

They boarded their carriage....

They embarked....

They were Pioneers....[7]

*****

Cosima strode from the room, slamming the door behind her. She leaned there a moment, gathering strength.
Dead. At sixty-nine. He was hard!
There were small lines around her dark eyes. Her beautiful hair was streaked with gray. She wanted to rest, before descending.
But not in their brass bed!

In the darkened parlor to the right of the stairs, the sons waited with their wives. Samuel, the eldest, was a doctor in a Dadanian town. He practised on an Indian reservation; braves bore the name Samuel, or Midas, in his honor, while he bore the name Pill Doctor, after the placebos he filled with sugar at night. William's grandson, Charlie, caught him at it.
He learned it from him.... He was a quack....

Well? Samuel asked.
Well, what? After all, he was a doctor....
That is, a quack....

Samuel was gaunt and prematurely bald from the unpardonable sinning endemic among his class in your typical Sowestole town.
John was blond, fat and sleek from totally guilt-free screwing. Cosima preferred John, the lawyer, the businessfuck. Like his old man. They had Marion's singing lessons to pay for.... Is there anything I can do? John was the executor.
Make a little speech.

*****

[7] Exactly what they were “pioneers” of, and that it likely wasn’t what they thought they were pioneers of, are problems for what Thomas Brown and others have characterized as “Whiggish” history, as for naively teleological history in general and indeed for all mankind. See, for exampe Cyril Greenland, "Origins of the Toronto Psychiatric Hospital," TPH: History and Memories of the Toronto Psychiatric Hospital, 1925-1966, ed. Edward Shorter (Toronto: Wall & Emerson, 1996), 19-58.

Pioneers of Alienation

Marion was away. They didn't say where, but they knew....

*****

There were representatives from Mr. Thing's government. The factories closed. It was a moot point whether the trains were on time. They weren't running.

There wasn't anything to do. Her servants would've done it, anyway....

She removed her beautiful ebony dildo from the drawer of the little Duncan Phyfe table behind the fire-screen decorated with fat angels. She glanced over the mantle, at her husband's portrait, as she slowly worked it between her thighs.

*****

Stuff it in! Cram it in!

*****

They buried him. They shivered seeing on one side the bay and on the other the town, its horizon penetrated by smoke stacks.

*****

The Rubber Factory. A Revised Price List from 1910. How many revisions since? Head Office at 47 Yonge Street looked about the same. Maybe it was condos now. Their products were second to those of no other makers or of unquestioned superiority. Who would doubt? Their Factory looked bigger than Krupp's.

Rubber which applied to duck which was stretched vulcanized and amalgamated into belting on the heaviest belt press in America. Right there in Porkdale Hoggland. Medieval torture techniques applied to rubber trees for the transmission of power. The General Manager of Boston Belting even wrote an Advice Column on how to get Maximum Power out of the Belts (Trees). The shafts should be as level as possible and the pulleys as large, to reduce compression on the underside of the belts to reduce wear on the plies. Good advice that every father should give his sons at least if they run a Rubber Factory.... There were formulae for the Horse Power of a given belt and the Arc of Contact.... For the width of belt required for a given amount of Work....

There was nothing like Rubber if properly used.... There was Maltese Cross Stitched Belting made with heaviest duck and highest quality rubber for high-speed dynamos. The plies didn't separate and they never slipped. There were belts for emery and sand. Endless Rubber Belts for threshing with very small pulleys. Extra Strong Belts for grain elevators like and including the one built by Barnett & Record of Minneapolis at Port Arthur the largest in the World with a capacity of 7,000,000 bushels. Thickened Rubber Face Belting for conveying coal and iron ore....

There was Hose for Every Purpose, so long as you didn't kink it. From Brewing through Vacuum Suction to Rock Drilling.... When you Hose leaks, don't try to stop it by tying a rag around it. Splice it. And keep it away from oil and grease. There was Monarch Woven Cotton Steam Hose for Rock Drills, designed to prevent mildew and guaranteed not to slip. There was Hose wound with Marline, Ratline, or Wire. There was Air Drill Hose, Pneumatic Tool Hose, and Sand Blast Hose....

There was Eureka Soft Suction Hose for first-class Fire Engines. Made without wire and to be flexible and light. The Maltese Cross brand was also carbolized to be mildew-free. The Beaver brand was low-priced but good value, as the name implies. There was Hose for Chemical Engines and Fire Extinguishers....

There was Air Brake Hose for Trains. There was Steam Car Heating Hose with special heavy cotton duck and hand-made tubing from double calendered stock. There was Corrugated Tender Hose with spiral wire embedded to prevent kinking or collapse for Steam or Water Service. Haggis Hose with steel wire inside for Railroad Suction Service. Gas Hose in 50-foot lengths with marline or wire for filling the tanks under the passenger cars with gas for lighting. Best of all were the Car Vestibule Diaphragms as in use between all Pullman coaches. These could be supplied large or small, light or heavy. Think of them as rubber tubing between coaches. There was something sexual about the one in the illustration besides the name. The coaches looked like men coupling....

There was Rubber for Piston Packing. For Pneumatic Gaskets. For Dregde Sleeves. For Pump Valves. For Rubber Springs. For Plumbers' Supplies. For Mallets. For Interlocking Tiling. For Rubber Mats. For Stair Treads. For Hockey Pucks. For Vehicle Tires. For Perambulator Tires. For Officers' Coats. For Hospital Bed Sheets. For Organ Bellows. For Men's and Women's Heels. For Footwear....

*****

The minister spewed:

He served god by working for the highest good of things, and is that not the best fruit of religion? William Midas was not a man who glibly used religious phrases, but he had the reality of religion in his heart and showed it in his life by the sacrifice of himself in promoting the well-being of things in this city and in this province....

John offered Cosima his hand, but she slapped it away.
The young men sneered as the minister finished.

He served God.
He served himself.
He had the reality of religion in his heart.
Bullshit. He had the religion of reality.

*****

Absent was Sam McFee.

*****

In 1926, the year of William Midas's death, Dadanian Pacifier demolished the old Queen's Hotel. There, at the Queen's, John A. Shyster had received Conservative supporters in the infamous Red Parlor.

He was so overwhelmed by junkets and drinking bouts that his face twitched and his arms jerked and the carpetbag fell to the floor, beside the front desk where the night clerk couldn't believe that that wreck before him was the Prime Sinister of Dadania.

A cynical busboy, recognizing him, led him upstairs to his room where, fully clothed, The Shyster collapsed on the unmade bed. He loosened his tie, unbuttoned his cuffs....

He was dead, and so was the Queen's.

Now Sam McFee, mayor of The City, ancient enemy of William Midas, strode through the marble foyer of the Big Hotel. The proud pile was the largest of its kind in the Empire, and McFee knew it. The complex spanned an area of 163,000 square feet and rose 395 feet above the ground. Eleven great turbines sucked 325,000 square feet of air through the intakes every second. McFee knew, and was proud. He took a great gulp of mechanized air and expanded his chest: proud! He was Mayor. Lord Willingdon (yes, a Lord!) would arrive and be received by him as The First Guest.

This was what McFee had always dreamed of, been the best at. As a child he'd earned spending money selling newspapers on Catherine Street. But that hadn't contented him.

He ran for public office, for the first time, in 1905. He was an alderman, when he was defeated. He was an alderman again. Then he decided to run for controller. He won, and resolved to run for Mayor. The first time he lost, but he tried again, and lost again. Discouraged, he retired from office. He resolved he'd try for Mayor one last time, and this time, he won.

Now his enemies could disparage him all they wanted. They could carp about the way he sold timber to the City Lumber Board, which he had himself appointed. They could complain about his Funnyside Amusement Company whose products, as controller, he'd urged The City to buy. And they could rave all they wanted to about this Midas, this deceased Hydro Man who'd literally brought light to things, and whom McFee had personally hated and publicly opposed. Yes, his critics could say what they wanted now.

He was Mayor!

Mayor McFee climbed two flights of stairs to the Convention Floor. He entered the Concert Hall. As his eyes adjusted to the darkness he distinguished tall, heavy draperies along one wall, relieved by mirrored panels holding bronze and crystal sconces. He flicked an electric switch to the right of the door and, suddenly, from a thousand fixtures like tiny fountain jets, the room was flooded, with light....

Yes, he considered, Hydro did marvels. On the ceiling it illuminated a mural of Icarus, and big-boobed Diana leading the hunt.

Zowee!

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Amidst the red carpet he confronted a mountain of leather-bound Bibles. The Gideons had already been there, and left this deposit for Opening Day. The exposed red edges made the sign of the cross. Hundreds, thousands of them.

Hogtown was exorcising him!

He was immensely relieved to see himself in a large gilded mirror.

With beady blue eyes and plentiful white hair, firm chin and slight paunch, in a conservative gray suit he was the epitome of the successful bootlegger.

He was still pretty....

He shuddered at the probity that supplied so much paper, so many copies of the Word of God, one for each of sixteen hundred hotel rooms. He couldn't use Bibles, except for perjuring himself on formal occasions. He shuddered again, thinking of the Gideon Society, the Temperance Society, all the various Societies.

His hand trembled as he checked his watch.

His chauffeur had just delivered a large shipment of booze....

He needed a stiff one...

The alky.....

*****

Lord Willingdon's Isotta-Fraschini churned slowly down the Draine....

The noon sun glittered on low fronts of crummy haberdasheries....

A few window-shoppers, strolling aimlessly, remarked the long, elegant car, rented for the occasion, from a wealthy contractor.

Lord Willingdon's chauffeur had crossed the Atlantic. On a Cunarder. He sat in the exposed section of the car, nervously reminding himself to drive on the right, his livery gleaming.

Butch!

The speaking tube protruded from the compartment behind him, like a penis.

Sir?

Time.

Twelve-fifty, Sir.

Hell.

Yes, Sir.

Time for a quick one.

Always, Sir. Slowing as he loosened his belt. He thought of the wrong turn in Sarajevo, Gavrilo standing on the corner.

*****

Mayor Sam McFee paced in the lobby. His watch said 12.53. His Lordship hadn't come yet.

McFee, who'd sold newspapers on Catherine Street, had always been punctual.

How like a Lord, fumed McFee.

How like a QUEEN....

As if answering in the affirmative, the long black car spun west at Draine Street onto Kunt. A porter minced through the double doors.

They're here!

Mayor McFee stopped pacing and the Directors of Dadanian Pacifier and the Board of Trade dropped their racing forms and stopped swapping smutty stories long enough to accompany him to the door.

A reporter photographed them as they stood, black leather shoes on a red carpet, a bronze balcony gleaming behind them, a black-coated, white-haired mob.

Porters opened the door. McFee descended, with the President and Premier Witless. The car stopped. A small crowd loitered under the pillars of the station opposite. A red-coated porter opened the doors of the limousine.

Lord Willingdon got out, top-hatted, whiskered, ashplant in hand. McFee leered as he clasped His Lordship's other hand. Sticky....

The Mayor released his hand to let the Lord meet the President and Sir Jimmy. They ascended the stairs to the waiting Directors and the Board of Trade. Lord Willingdon shook hands with each of them, and entered The Hotel. At the marble counter a flunky presented the Guest Book.

He wrote a great big

That evening the guests of the Board of Trade arrived for the feast in honor of the President of Dadanian Pacifier.

*****

The grand salon was stuffed.

Thirty oak tables seated six each, loaded with scalloped damask, cut crystal, and silver cutlery bearing The Hotel insignia. In a clearing under the big bay window, an orchestra played sprightly French jazz. The porters stripped the Aubusson carpets from a glossy square on the floor. The conductor convulsed by himself in the spotlight, like a snake in the electric chair. Nobody danced.

They gorged and swilled great quantities and varieities of food and drink off Spode platters born on waiters' liveried arms....

A dais had been erected for the Guests of Honor and Chief Boyars. It was festooned with purple bunting, Union Jacks, maple leaves, two-headed beavers....

There sprawled the Directors of Dadanian Pacifier, the Mayor, and dignitaries. Distinguished among them was one John A. Midas, son of the famous Hydro Czar and Public Slave, upstanding member of the Order of Masons, Vice-President of the Dadania Permanent Company.

He looked stunning in pince-nez....

John escorted his mistress. His wife was guzzling after-shave, in a room with the shades drawn, in an expensive suburb.

The alky....

He glanced at Lisa, the bimbo secretary. Lisa beamed. Listening to sprightly Mickey Mouse Jazz adaptations of The Maple Leaf Forever.

Enjoy yourself, bitch.

John teased the cute number who'd stooped to refill his coffee cup with vino. He loosened the bow of her white apron. She smiled, but slapped his hand.

Saucebox!

Lisa flirted with the black-haired, broad-backed Director on her other side. He discussed sports. Lisa sighed. Just her luck.

He was a.... Fag!

*****

Vivamus, mea Lesbia, et....

He'd written, and the students had translated.

Let us live, O my Lesbia, and....

Charlie Midas watched Noah Knowall erase the black board.

Charlie? The principal glared at him.

He wonderd, how could that interest him. He didn't know Latin. In tennis love is nothing. Catullus was an emotional Valentino. He loved a lesbian, so nothing. His father loved Lisa.

When they're old, they might as well be dykes.

Charlie! The prinipal was mean, dispassionate. Not Latin-tempered.

Sir!?

Go home.

Home?

Where you live, Charlie. No, stay. For half an hour, and clean the brushes. Longer, if it takes you.

Charlie stared.

It will take you. Charlie, can I trust you to conduct yourself as a responsible young man, or must I drag you with me again tomorrow, a nuisance and a show?

He leaned over the blond boy.

The first one, sir.

The which?

Trust me, sir.

Charlie walked between rows of yellow oak desks bolted into the waxy floor. He removed the brushes from the dusty ledges of the blackboard and carried them, dusty, against his chest. He went outside through the double-door.

Pioneers of Alienation

He noticed as he entered the school-yard that he had stained his red sweater white. Amamus, he murmured, beating the brushes against the empty bicycle rack.

Charlie was a high-grade moron.
He didn't know which was the sun or the moon....

Low-grade, he corrected himself, driving home.

Charlie returned the brushes to the ledge and removed his coat from the cloakroom. About the blackboards, the crude sketches, the stale cloakroom, he had nightmares; otherwise, nothing.
His father was bad, he knew. He rarely saw him, and he never saw his mother. When he tried to picture her face, he saw nothing. She must be dead.
Brushing his sweater, he wondered if his father was like Catullus.
Catullus was fascinating.
As for himself, he was learning Latin.

He strolled home, traces of Catullus's love on his sweater. He wanted to live in The City, with his father and Lisa.

Well, see if you can sing this while you spell....
C.O.N.S.T.A.N....

Vivamus!

*****

Charlie drank. He and Jack rented a room over a hardware store on King Street in The Town. They could swill, away from Cosima. Cosima wouldn't do anything. She leaned in the doorway, long after Charlie had gone out for the evening, gazing after him. She knew he went drinking.
John was away....
She surrendered, returned to her chair in the parlor, to read Pearls from Emerson: Self-Reliance.

*****

On the evening of November 17, 1938, Charlie sat alone at a shaky writing table before a dirty window in a rented room. A newspaper lay open before him. There was a rim on it, from the scotch he held in his hand.

Hogtown Mourns Mayor
Benefactor of Madkind [sic]
Sam McFee
DEAD at 75
Thousands of Grief-Stricken
Fellow-Citizens
Attend Unique
Once-in-a-Lifetime
Service
at
City Hall

He raised the scotch to his lips, sipped, set it on McFee's head. Crown Royal. Crowned granddad's enemy.
How McFee drank. The alky....
He set the glass down sharply, after another sip. The contradictions. One sentence described how McFee had always been a man of things. The next, with regal-poetic unction, described the splendor of his funeral, the vast marble hall where the (paunchy) corpse lay on its bier, the massed Lummoxville Boy Choir and the soloist on the right of the grand staircase, the assembled dignitaries on the left.
Man of things!
His grandfather had been a real man of things, and look what it had done for him. He died early, a loved hated man, while McFee prospered, died old age of gout, and was posthumously proclaimed man of things in his papers!
Charlie laughed when he read how McFee's common things had only been admitted into the gallery.
He read, thirsty for contradictions.
He drank.

Thing Street Asylum

The Commissioner of the Sally Anne said, Father of mercies and God of all comfort.... Whose love is boundless....
The Rabbi said, We are consumed by thy anger, by thy wrath we are troubled.... What's left of us....

The Baptist?!

It was schizophrenic![8]

*****

He rose (unsteadily) to answer the door. He admitted Jack, and his girl.
Charlie!

Wait till you see that out of town gal of mine!

O, howdy!

Dorothy: Charlie.
What's to drink? She was hot. She had thick, short hair, brown like her eyes. Like his grandmother's, once.
She had what Lisa Gordon had.

I'll say she does.

She was a Small Town Girl with an office job (Chrysler? Dominion Sugar?). She lived in a cramped flat. She watched movies at the Capitol featuring predictable heroines (Bette Davis, Rita Hayworth, Loretta Young). She read novels.
Yes, thought Charlie, she drinks.
He studied her as she accepted a glass of scotch from Jack.
I'll say. The alky.

Dorothy squatted on the cot where Jack had thrown their coats. She nestled among the folds.

What do you do?
He leaned over, hands in pockets, interrogating. (Nice tits.)

[8] Actually, at this time and in Toronto, it would have been dementia praecox (which unfortunately does not lend itself easily to an adjective). At this time C. K. Clarke's emphasis on the individual found a suitable disease in this. In "Dementia Praecox," British Medical Journal 2 (1906): 755-57 Clarke observes that, even if Kraepelin himself has yet to give an "absolute definition" of dementia praecox (755), (the term is unfortunate, especially as it is applied to "cases which cannot fairly be called precocious, and others which are written off the records as recovered" (756)), the "Kraepelin idea" is the most promising for the future of psychiatry, "the one that points to the most hopeful line of investigation to put psychiatry on a more solid basis than has yet been the case" (756). Clarke suggests that more clinical work would enable it to do so -- especially the clinical observation and surveillance of ever younger members of the lower classes. He elaborates the idea in a slightly later article, repeating comments he originally made in 1906 before the American Medico-Psychological Association in Boston, in which he urged a "careful study of school children" in order to weed out "weaklings" likely to develop into cases of dementia praecox. Anticipating arguments for eugenics that would be made by members of the Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene in the 20s and 30s, Clarke observes in the present piece that if left to itself nature would weed out such cases on its own, but "civilization and culture" are not necessarily governed by "nature's laws" (344). Consequently, Clarke implies, dementia praecox is becoming more prevalent; alienists must do some of nature's work themselves.

Clarke himself offers a convenient definition in "The Detection of Mental Defect in School Children," The Canadian Journal of Medicine and Surgery 21.6 (June, 1907): 343-48. "Now, what is dementia precox [sic] -- in other words, precocious dementia? If we limit its definition carefully, we find that it is a form of mental disease appearing generally at the first developmental crisis, rapidly running a course culminating in dementia, as characterized by apathy, indifference, negativism, irrelevance and inability to make continued mental effort" (344). See J.P. Harrison, M.D., "Dementia Praecox," The Bulletin of the Ontario Hospitals for the Insane 3.5 (April, 1910), 6-16. He was the Clinical Assistant at the Toronto Asylum in 1910, so his definitions must reflect the way the disease was perceived toward the end of Clarke's tenure at the Toronto Asylum. His definitions are (not surprisingly) very close to his Superintendent's. Dementia Praecox is a "disease ... of the period of puberty and adolescence. It is characterized by a dementia that tends to progress, but which is frequently interrupted by remissions. The majority of cases occur beteen the ages of twenty and forty, though cases have been reported even earlier than the fifteenth year and as late as the fiftieth" (6-7). General symtpoms include "lack of interest, carelessness, and indifference to dress and environment" (9). He also discusses the forms. "Hebephrenia" is characterized by "mental apathy and progressive dementia" (10), "catatonia" by "hysterical attacks, with epileptiform convulsions" (12), and "paranoia" by "delusions of persecution ... not well systematized, occurring in conjunction with marked intellectual impairment" (15). Like Clarke, he considers dementia praecox, or at least the disposition to it, an inherited disorder. He theorizes that the "disease" -- "retrograde process" (7) -- is "hastened, or perhaps immmediately initiated" by "debilitating influences in early life, such as excessive study, masturbation, etc." (7).

She pushed back the hair from her low brow.

*****

What do you do, for a living?
Sugar.
She meant the Dadania Dominion Sugar Factory.
The factory, or the office?
Factory.
I work at Libbys.
Factory, or office?
Office.
She brightened.
Why doesn't your father send you away to school? He can afford it. When you come back you can work in The City. Be an executive, a lawyer, a

Doctor!

Charlie smiled. (They were, really, very nice.)
Don't you want to go to school?
No. Look. Listen to me. (Talking like a gangster! Terribly misunderstood.) I don't have to explain, see?

Dorothy sat quietly on the bed beside the writing table. Listening.
Charlie cranked the machine and dropped the needle onto the disc. A castrato voice rose out of the horn.

I'm always high, high, high
Up in the hills,
Watching the clouds
roll
by....

*****

While Dr. C. K. Clarke[9] believed industry was potentially a whole new Dominion for the exercise of psychiatric authority, as he put it, a live issue, he did not think factory girls deserved a minimum wage. They were Immoral Women and Mental Weaklings.

Writing in MacLean's Magazine on April 15, 1922[10] as the head of a large psychiatric clinic, no longer an Asylum with a fixed place and a definite inside and outside, but a diffused entity, a Virtual Asylum with tentacles reaching into community and nation, Clarke began his discussion of what he called The Occupational Wanderer with stagy, contrived dialogue between himself and an ostensibly upper-class swell.

The swell facetiously speculated that Clarke must have been an Occupational Wanderer himself, having had more than two dozen jobs in his life (22).

Clarke complacently assured him that, since his jobs had all been onward and upward, he could not be an Occupational Wanderer, whose jobs were always onward, and downward (22).

Clarke illustrated his meaning, with the narrative of Trixie Jane.

Trixie Jane talks like a B movie gangster's moll; Clarke's own voice is scarcely better realized, unless he wanted to sound as condescending as he does here:

Well, Trixie, what's the trouble this time?
Same old thing, Doc, fired. Gee, this is fierce, and now another course of treatment in the Out-Patient. Doesn't it beat....

[9] Dr. C.K. Clarke was born in 1857 in Elora, Ontario and died in 1924 in Toronto. He became Superintendent at the Toronto Asylum in 1905 and resigned in 1911 when he became Superintendent of the Toronto General Hospital. In 1908 he became a full professor of psychiatry and Dean of Medicine at the University of Toronto. His career was marked by a long struggle to establish a psychiatric hospital, establishment of the first psychiatric clinic in Canada in 1909 (more precisely an out-patient service), and the formation of the Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene, with himself as Medical Director in 1918. See Cyril Greenland, Charles Kirk Clarke: A Pioneer of Canadian Psychiatry (Toronto: The Clarke Institute of Psychiatry, 1966).

[10] Dr. C.K. Clarke, "Occupational Wanderers," MacLean's Magazine (April 15, 1922): 22-42.

> Never mind what it beats, Trixie, you don't need to finish the sentence. For what were you fired'?
>
> Nothin worth talkin about. You know I was a usher in one of the Vaudevilles and got all broke up on a trapeze artist and stayed away two days. Told them I had a cold, but couldn't get it across. Gee, but I had some swell times though! (22)

Clarke concluded the interview by observing that Trixie was a typical Occupational Wanderer, a pretty little butterfly with an undeveloped brain (22)....

He ignored everything she indicated, including sexual exploitation by male employers, deplorable working conditions, being poisoned by the chocolate she handled in the Laura Secord Candy Factory, etc., etc..

Instead he dwelt on her extreme demimonde fashion, bobbed hair, stockings of filmy thinness (22)....

As if for dramatic effect, among all these signs of fallenness, he remarked her complexion that was only too evidently made-in-Dadania (22)....

Then, superficial as his analysis was, Clarke accused Trixie of superficiality. He doubted that she even had any emotions, but felt certain that if she did they were so shallow that it would scarcely be possible to notice them (22). Clarke obviously had difficulty....

He similarly failed to notice that Trixie had a sense of morality, although she admitted, she was immoral (22)....

The phrase that Clarke used to characterize her behavior, the capitalization of her beauty, offered an obvious connection between her personal immorality and that of the society that exploited her labor by day and her sex by night. But Clarke declined to explore it, if he noticed it, his sympathies being with the factory supervisors to whom Trixie was merely a hindrance to the efficiency of the plant (22).

Such connections, and incriminations, are implicit throughout Clarke's essay, which lends itself to POLYVALENT REVERSAL: the interviewer interviewed by his interviewee, albeit posthumously, and unwittingly. It is arguable that Clarke didn't read his Interview any more sympathetically, or carefully, than his patients' Histories. He was unsubtle.

The irony is obvious when one realizes that Clarke is afraid of Trixie as a perpetrator of irreparable harm to the community (22). Assuming the stance of a cautious reformer of popular stereotypes, challenging the depiction of women in the popular media as more intelligent than (he thinks) they really are (23), while exploiting and reinforcing worse stereotypes, he urges us to see Trixie as a hideous skeleton in the cupboard of civilization (23).

Fearing her, he warns us to beware her type, the developing paranoid, nursing ideas of persecution and flitting here and there, to escape imaginary enemies (22).

But who is afraid? Who is paranoid? At least one of Trixie's enemies was very real....

The case of Jennie was similar.

A high grade moron, her animal energy and good looks compensate for mental deficiency. After she tires of stuffing chocolate boxes for Laura Secord at sixteen dollars a week and takes to a pretty continuous life of immorality, she could easily corrupt a whole circle of weaklings if left to her own devices, and is as dangerous as dynamite in the community (42)....

Till she is institutionalized....

*****

Marion was admitted on December 24, 1910.[11]

Her Schedule No. 2 states that she was an 18 year old Presbyterian debutante who had been insane for years; her condition first manifested itself as an inclination to run away from home....

She suffered from immoral delusions and was considered dangerous to herself and others.

She got committed to Industrial School, for stealing. Her conduct was good, but gradually deteriorated. She was considered mentally defective (although her letters suggest otherwise), a moral imbecile.

Marion was observant and sociable with other patients. The examiner considered her withdrawn and devious (she wouldn't share the details of her sex-life), although she was candid enough to tell him that she intended to elope as soon as she possibly could....

The Clinical Record shows the authorities retaining value judgments in the face of contradictory information, consistent with their diagnosis of Moral Insanity/Imbecility. It could be applied to someone quite the opposite of stupid, whose behavior the authorities didn't condone, whose beliefs they didn't share.

They emphasized Marion's pursuit of pleasure, her insistence on having a good time, her refusal to be anything except, as they demurely put it, as shown by her life in the last few months.

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[11] See Archives of Ontario, Ministry of Health Records, Queen Street Mental Hell Centre, Case Files, RG 10-20-B-2. Names and institutional identifiers within the last hundred years have not been reproduced. Pseudonyms have been used instead.

They ignored her intense desire to get out of Thing Street before her father could come for her, to be entirely free from him.

Marion ran away from home as soon as she could.

Nothing was made of this.

She hated Christmas!

Like others in Thing Street, Marion understood. Her examinations were used to fabricate as well as expose the symptoms of madness.

She was reluctant to talk, because talking too much was what got her in trouble in the first place.

Her language was selectively quoted against her, as if her alleged moral depravity was best conveyed in the argot of a sub-class....

You bet your life I'm not quiet....

H.C. [Dr. Harvey Clare] concluded on January 3, 1911 that she was a bad-tempered girl, on the basis of her getting cross and scolding other patients. At the same time, he noted her considerable vivacity, her capacity to laugh at a word.

He did not attempt to weigh one attribute against the other, to suggest a balanced personality, to permit a positive construction of her character....

Instead, he presented her attributes in isolation, in which case the negatives outweighed the positives. Isolated, they suggested shallowness, idiocy....

Marion was really very sociable, and missed normal social routines....

Like going to the movies....

An entry relates that she stayed up till midnight with the night-nurse, and accompanied her downtown, to the movies....

They got along so well that the nurse agreed to share a room with her on College Street. They eloped from Thing Street Asylum, and went to work for Lady Eatone's Fancy-Wear Company, till the doctors found out and ordered the former nurse to return their patient, or face prosecution.

They anticipated trouble, convinced Marion had a psychosis upon a marked defective basis....

After labeling and condemning her proclivities, they waited for her to react. They expected the outbreak at any moment, but Marion's language stayed clean, her demeanor calm. They grudgingly acknowledged what many would have surmised already, that she wasn't mad, only perverse....

Then they got what they were looking for, and probably precipitated. She had a special feeling for Dr. Clare. At the end of the Asylum Ball on November 20, 1911, as the patients were leaving the hall, she slapped his face.

An outbreak of that quick temper he'd noted earlier, or something else?

Nothing was made of this.

She apologized to Dr. Clare for her rudeness and expressed a willingness to let bygones be bygones. What she forgave, and whether Dr. Clare forgave her, were not recorded.

On October 8, 1912 she barricaded herself in her room with a female patient who had been allowed to visit her.

She smashed a 40-watt Mazda © lamp....

*****

On June 30, 1911, Marion eloped but was arrested at 9 P.M. on Thing Street, by an attendant named Cassidy. She had been propositioning a man.

In October she had to be confined to a single room and given rugs instead of sheets, because rugs were harder to tear up....

She eloped again on June 4, 1916. On June 30 she was arrested with a successful bootlegger, with whom she'd been living on Thing Street....

At 7 P.M. on August 11, 1916 she eloped yet again, using a key that she'd stolen from the nurse.

She was arrested a few days later, near her brother's house. She said she'd been staying with a Mrs. Pickup on Church Street. She'd had a job at the Massive Munitions Works, but quit because of the noise.

On September 12, 1917 she got all dressed up to see her mother (she said), but instead eloped once more. The patients watched her go, but said nothing, till she was off the grounds.

Her file contains letters addressed to soldiers in hospitals in England and Canada. It was thoughtful of her, under the circumstances, to attempt to divert her readers:

> If you seen me you would scream for assistance. I have a face like a carrot[,] a shape like a catsup bottle and my feet run all over the sidewalk. Some chicken believe me. Are you one of mamma's boys? We have a battalion over here called mamma's darlings and believe me they are some boys.

She was frank about her profession, if somewhat allegorical:

> I am employed at the sausage factory putting hamburg steak in tights till 8 P.M. then I work for street and walker cutting corners and polishing nails. Some job believe me.

She complained about difficulty writing. A note in the Record for June 28 1916 indicates that she was suffering from a felon on her finger. She wouldn't let anyone see it.

They never got her letters.

She attended the weekly dances, and decorated her room.

She was written off October 12, 1917.

*****

In his 1891 Report, in typically paradigmatic fashion, (Daniel) Clark presented two cases, A and B, illustrating through comparison and contrast the strengths and weaknesses of the two modes or rather processes of admission.

Both A and B go mad in the street. The only difference in the two cases is that A is found by friends, B by a policeman.

A's friends take him directly to the medical superintendent, papers are issued, and A is almost immediately admitted.

B is arrested, conveyed to gaol, committed under warrant, brought before a magistrate, and committed again to gaol awaiting further examination by the gaol surgeon, the judge, and another doctor. Provided these find B insane, the papers are sent to the Provincial Secretary, who relays them to the Inspector of Asylums, who relays them to the Medical Superintendent, who eventually returns them to the Secretary. If everything by this time is still in order, a warrant of transfer is issued to a bailiff and the prisoner is finally admitted to the Asylum.

Sadly for B, getting out is as difficult as getting in. While A may be released by the Superintendent "at five minutes notice" (9), B can only get out by virtue of the same power that committed him. As usual, the underlying argument appears to be for more discretionary powers for the Doctor.

The difference isn't simply that one is found by a policeman and the other by friends. The difference is that one was RICH, and had friends in the first place, while the other is poor and friendless.....

*****

By the 1920s lunatic writing reflected technological innovations that accounted for the decline in volume.

It was about time.

Telephones and radios were becoming common. Things had better things to do in the evening, than write letters. There was a telephone in every ward. There were day-trips to the movies. Miss Marvel saw her sister fleeing on the fire-escape, in a most movie picture attitude.

By the end of the 20s schizophrenics heard voices over the radio, like everyone else.

Soon it would be Death by Television....

The Six-Day Bicycle Race....

*****

The innovations of Clarke's "individual approach" not-withstanding, "Asylum Life" up to the late 1920s does not seem radically different form what it was at the turn of the century, and the texts considered here reflect its (rather depressing) continuity with the 19th-century. It might be argued that by the mid 1920s it was at its apex, in that it still largely existed, and in that it had been around long enough for it to have developed its own history -- it was conscious of itself; it was a culture (consider the case of the Highchurch family, in the preceding chapter). Modern forms of electronic communication, occupational therapies, intrusive therapies, and (last but certainly not least) intrusive social workers -- would radically transform it.[12]

Dr. J.M. Forster succeeded Dr. Clarke in 1911; the annual reports for the period are less grand, less polemical, and therefore textually less interesting than those of his predecessors. In 1920 Dr. Forster was transferred to the new Asylum at Whitby. His report for the year ending October 31, 1920 was its first; it had previously been a Military Hospital. His

[12] Dr Herriman, in the annual report for 1932, reports that "with the appointment of Miss Katherine Day as social worker a great change has been effected in respect to contact with patients' families and environmental conditions and in respect to conditions concerning probationary cases." In 1933 the province officially adopted the policy of placing selected patients in approved boarding homes. Such arrangements naturally altered the conditions of the class of patient represented here. Those who could write well tended to make it out, as did their mail. Beginning in the 1930s, there are fewer letters, and more Social Service Reports.

description of the arrival of the first patients, mainly from the Toronto Asylum, strikes a chord: John Howard's offhand mention of the arrival of the first patients at Toronto, in horse-drawn wagons, like so much coal:

> A careful selction had to be made as this hospital was planned to be very open and lend itself to supervision rather than detention. A special car accommodating about sixty patients was engaged daily and attached to one of the regular trains from Toronto to Whitby. From Whitby Junction this car was brought on the siding to the Hospital grounds, and from there they were soon in the new quarters.

They arrived in wagons like so much coal. Seventy years later the anthracite variety leave by "special car."[13] Dr. Forster is apprehenisve about giving these former Asylum patients too much freedom. He adds another term to the official lexicon: "supervision."

In the next year's report he is similarly anxious about another innovation, the introduction of Occupational Therapy, which he describes as "the beginning of a concerted and scientific effort on the part of the staff to, if possible, allay or ameliorate the progress of a dementing process so familiar and yet so regrettable to all medical observers." "Dementing Process" was the same term he applied to the experience of shell shock victims. Dr. Forster expresses a degree of uneasiness about the "tremendous amount of freedom being conceded our patients."

The annual reports for the 1920s are very scant for the Queen Street Asylum, no doubt partly because its future still seemed uncertain. The report of W.K. Ross for 1931 is at once strikingly similar to the reports of Daniel Clark, and portentous of innovations that promised to permanently alter Asylum life. Dr. Ross celebrates such improvements as new "fireproof" cement staircases in the Main Building; the (rather long-delayed) move of the Roman Catholic Chapel from the upper story of the Main Building to a room off the basement corridor; the renovation of the old Chapel as a new dormitory for the nurses; the removal of the (hardly "fireproof") paint shop from the Main Building to the grounds; the installation of a new electric dumb-waiter, etc. But after all these "changes" come others more real. Dr. Ross notes, for example, that 30 paretic patients received malarial treatment and 800 intravenous injections of salvarsan or novarsan were given in the last year.[14] Over 100 patients were treated with manganese chloride.

*****

A 52 year old housekeeper, a Theosophist, admitted in February of 1927, heard voices as she passed an old undergarment between her legs to keep out the ray. She said she was being impersonated by things who were after her money. She wasn't clairvoyant yet, but believed she would be one day.

She wrote a cross between a Clinical Record and a Radio Play.

The initials M.V. and W.V. are written in the penciled margin where, in the Clinical Record, the doctors' initials would have appeared. The dialogue is recorded where the main text would have been. The initials stand for Man's Voice and Woman's Voice, but sometimes both voices are male. Sometimes the voice is the patient's. Occasionally the dialogue is interrupted by a passage of authorial comment, as would have happened in a Clinical Record. The date is indicated at the top of the page, the time of day in the margin. Even sound-effects are added, as in the following passages:

(Monday, January 24, 1927)
W.V. You had better get her in the Mimico Asylum to-night if possible.
M.V. Yes I think so.
(scratching at door)
W.V. How you startled me.
M.V. Take that light off that woman.
Two or three times today they have tortured me with the Ray or whatever it is they seem to have down below which shoots up my womb like Electricity ....

*

W.V. This is my son, he's going to McGill University.
(11:30)

---

[13] See Shirley G. Morriss, ed., The Journal of John George Howard (Toronto: Ontario Heritage Foundation; Ministry of Citizenship and Culture, 198-?). Howard, the architect of the Provincial Lunatic Asylum, describes how, in the late 1840s, the first patients from the Temporary Asylum arrived by "wagonload."

[14] One such "case" seems typical. On May 21, 1926 a 42 year old labourer was admitted with the symptoms of paresis: "flattened out expression of facial muscles, slurring speech, corase tremor of fingers, talks at random and shows flights of ideas. Memory and orientation patchy." In July of 1926 he was given a series of treatments of suphoxyl salvarsan and bismuth. By Novemer of 1926 he had become depressed and had to be tube fed. He received another series of salvarsan treatments in January of 1827 and one D.R.F. thought that he had improved physically if not mentally. The patient polished the floor. In July he suffered an "epileptiform seizure" and in late July appeared to be failing, but by 1928 he was receiving non-specific protein therapy and seemed brighter. In the early 30s he eloped several times, once gettinga s far as his borhter's house. In October of 1932 his Wasserman was negative. In the late 1930s he is described as "a paretic who works about the hall" and "hangs about the ward doors trying to escape." It is difficult to gauge the degree of his "recovery," as he spoke little English. The doctors had initially interviewed him through an interpreter.

M.V. What do you want us to do?
W.V. Have the woman examined.
M.V. She is alright, you leave hear alone ...

*

M.V. What are you doing to that woman?
Women's Voices: Go on make her holler.
M.V. Stop that, this is positive torture to that woman.
(Wednesday, January 2, 1927)
M.V. There is something in all this, that woman is all right besides she'[s] a Rosicrusian [sic].
M.V. Do you think so.
W.V. Yes, she is studying the doctrine.
M.V. If that is so, we'll not allow this persecution. No, no more of it.
M.V. It isn't right.
W.V. Then let her get another man.

*

W.V. It's Electric. Hydro-Electric. It[']s Rape by Radio or so they call it.
M.V. How do you account for it. She certainly knows all we say.

*

W.V. What do you think of it, Doc?
M.V. This woman has been burned.
W.V. The juice is on again.
M.V. This is the Radio hour.

The format enabled her to delude herself that she'd co-opted the Clinical Record that she knew was being written about her. It was therapeutic. Combining her Clinical Record with a form of popular entertainment made her seem almost normal, a star.

That explained why she overheard things talking about her. Like the old man and the boy who sat opposite her on the streetcar. (Like M.V. and W.V.?)

She heard one passenger tell another that she was the girl they'd got on the Radio. The Radio Artist!

Was it not awful?

She recognized the boy as an operator and told him, before she got off, that his number was up.

She was discharged on June 20, 1927.

*****

Hip hooray,
I feel delighted.
Yesterday,
I was invited
To a swell affair;
All the movie-stars were there.
Oh what fun!
The party lasted
Till the break of dawn.
Famous Players
Turned to cabareters;
How they fooled and carried on....

Dancing at that moving picture ball....
Charlie Chaplin with his feet
Stepped all over poor Blanche Sweet....

Sennet bathing girls were there
Each one was a little bare....

Pioneers of Alienation

Dancing at the moving picture ball....

Maurice Burkhart
Edison Diamond Disc SRP-0103-10

*****

Waves crashed; children screamed. Drowning.
The Company Photographer set up his equipment on the beach to photograph The Annual Picnic.
Company Men stood talking, in hideous boxers. Empty!
Charlie, in just trunks, and Dorothy, in a flattering flowered ensemble, stood apart.
More waves crashed. Children screamed, some more. Drowned.
Do it! Come on! Do it! He pushed Dorothy into the water. The gleaming spray flattened the red-blond hair against his legs. The sand gave underfoot. She started to fall.
Boxer-suited men looked up.
Charlie! I don't wanna! Dorothy protested. Lanky, red-haired, boxer-suited Charlie forced her into the swell.
Do it, Baby! He knocked her down. She immediately got up again, but concluding that he wouldn't let her come back till she co-operated, she said it was stupid, but swam out forty feet, and floundered. Charlie reached her just as she seemed about to drown.
He saved her.
The throng cheered as Charlie carried Dorothy up the beach. Nice work!
An item appeared in the News, under the heading:

Heroic Redhead
Saves
his Girl

And I'm on the crest of a wave....

*****

Charlie placed his glass so that it just covered his picture, under the headline:

Girl Marries
Redhead Rescuer

He raised it, leaving another round stain, a bridal wreath.
He replaced it, empty.

*****

Miss Marvel (admitted on October 21, 1919) described a visit to her lawyer during which she left her black key in his vault and related her suspicion that her sister was addicted to drugs. She believed there was a burglar under her bed. A man who boarded her sister's streetcar, and to whom her sister spoke, was interested in buying her drug company. In the evening she saw druggy-looking things loitering around the house.
She went to see Dr. Green, who assured her, no one would stick a needle in her, without her knowing it....
She thought they could, if they etherized her first.
The doctor assured her, the druggy-looking things wouldn't follow her any more, but when she visited her lawyer later that day, she found someone had gone in ahead of her. It was her sister, she'd obviously been following her...
She described how, as she left, the lawyer opened the door and discovered her sister creeping down the fire-escape in a moving-picture attitude, as if she'd followed her, and eavesdropped on their conversation....

*****

Charlie. Let's beat it.
Honey, we don't have the dough.

She slid away from him on the sofa and thought for a moment, in the shadow. How different her things were from Charlie's. When they told Cosima they were getting married, she treated her like a peasant, a contamination.

That's how Cosima saw her, hereditary taint....

Psychosis, upon a marked defective basis....

She'd seen it before....

Let's beat it.

Honey, we're broke.

Ah, Charlie! Can't we beat this crummy town?

Where to?

You know....

Charlie knew. Niagara Falls. Grandfather. White Coal.

Well, where then?

The Hotel. One week!

That's not expensive?

We'll manage. I got money.

We'll see.

He turned off the Hydro.

*****

John met Dorothy and Charlie at the station in The City. He was with Lisa; Dorothy reminded him of Lisa. They slowly crossed Kunt, into The Hotel.

Dorothy was impressed. She admired the Station full of dazed travelers focused on nowhere. It was like movies. Radio. Records....

She wondered at the massive bulk of The Hotel towering above them across the street. The gleaming brass on the revolving door, a brass and crystal turbine....

Elegance.

Miss Gordon knew. It was Hydro. She did not deny its beauty, but it was a waste of electricity....

They sat at her old table. The orchestra broke into rousing Mickey Mouse jazz variations on The Maple Leaf Forever. The musicians wore scarlet tunics and pince-nez. With whip and spurs the mounted conductor kept time.

That's my weakness now....

*****

We'll fight! If necessary, but not necessarily.

He sat at the radio, in his shirtsleeves. Sweat staining the pits....

The Prime Minister had just delivered a Declaration of War. Or a hypothesis, maybe....

Dorothy imagined the old fart tripping over the microphone, dropping his pince-nez.

She turned off the Hydro.

*****

Charlie told her that he'd been examined and approved for training. He'd be attached to an artillery unit. She gathered he was going.

I know it'll be hard sometimes.

I'll live with Sharon. We'll share.

She'd work at the sugar factory, till she had Victor.

They went to bed. Charlie lay beside Dorothy in the yellow four-poster, his head propped up on his hands. She waited. He looked at the room with the lace curtains, the picture of Dorothy's mother in an oval frame, the heavy chest of drawers against the other wall by the foot of the bed.

He throttled the frilly lamp on the bedside table.

They turned off the Hydro.

*****

Stuff it in! Cram it in!

*****

Dorothy and Sharon found a flat in an alley.
Eight months later Dorothy had Victor.
With long, dark hair and a veil, Sharon was an unreliable narrator.
What a shame, dear, Charlie couldn't be here.
There's a war on.
Victor balled. A nurse removed him.

*****

The train pulled into the station. A crowd waited under the eaves. Dorothy glimpsed Charlie, riding the platform between the cars.
He waved.
He leapt down before the conductor could adjust the step.
They embraced before the adoring crowd. It was like a scene in a movie. Red-head Rescuer. With extras.
Charlie. Victor.

Victor gazed stupidly at the uniformed man. He offered his hand. Charlie smiled, but didn't shake it. He picked him up, and held him a moment. His blond hair was too long. He had his blue eyes, but his features were effeminate.
Dorothy watched them, father and son.
Still holding Victor, Charlie regarded his wife. Then he put him down and embraced her. Victor retreated against his mother's skirts.
A spoiled brat. A Fag.

*****

Sharon exhaled gray smoke in a jet-stream through cherry-red lips.
Elvira? What a.... name.

*****

Dorothy cringed on one end of the brown crochet-covered chesterfield, Charlie sprawled on the other. Cosima's Pomeranian growled between them.

Elvira sprawled on the floor with Johnny, her new brother.

Dorothy looked around. It wasn't often she was invited to Cosima's house. She knew Cosima wanted her to feel honored. It was a treat. Beside Cosima's chair was an old upright Heintzmann which, Dorothy knew, Cosima never played any more. Her hands were too arthritic. She didn't sing either.
Cosima rocked, her cup-and-saucer balanced in her lap.

Through the small archway Dorothy saw the grandfather clock in the hall. Charlie remembered watching the pendulum swinging in the coffin-shaped space that smelled like church.
Time, thought Dorothy. It got ahead of her, stopped, and started again without her. She had been a widow during the war. Now she wasn't anything.
If only Cosima had sent him back to school, given him hope, enlightenment. There was no money.
John lost it.

He squandered his son's tuition in the grand ballrooms, lounges and salons of The Hotel.

Thing Street Asylum

The children shrieked, tearing across the room. The Pomeranian barked. Charlie stared at the floor.
The pendulum flashed.
A gold fob....

*****

Dorothy moaned in their big four-poster bed....
Morning....
Charlie snored....
Elvira slept in an upstairs bedroom, Victor in another. When he was home.
He wasn't....
He was fifteen....
Johnny was in the next room. His crib had iron bars painted blue and a mattress that was white and hard.
He was waking up....
She didn't want him....

*****

While his perfervid language in the Canadian Journal of Medicine and Surgery (June, 1907) was meant to convey the pathos of their frail barks drifting to their inevitable doom beneath the Niagara of Dementia, Dr. C. K. Clarke's two sample case histories, J.M. and E.M., revealed instead his total lack of sympathy for his patients.[15]

J.M., abnormally intelligent, was persecuted for cleverness by teachers and classmates. E.M. walked with a proud strut and wore her hair in an unusual style, for which eccentricity she too was persecuted by her peers. She resorted to some form of unnamed wickedness, obviously prostitution, and was arrested and confined in Thing Street Asylum for the Insane. In a few years she, too, was reduced to a lump of hideous clay (346).

*****

He would think, after bedtime or before getting up, watching light play on the ceiling. Listening to his heart beating, a ball pounding.

He thought about events. He had been captured by a teenager who made him cry, got bored, and freed him. To Ma! Dorothy made things worse, calling him in ahead of the others.

He had begun to hide his toys in a corner of the cellar where he thought no one would find them. Last night he heard his friends through the wall, calling to one another in the twilight, playing with his toys. That disturbed him. He wouldn't play with toys again.

*****

Sharon was a middle-aged cocotte in a white stucco bungalow. It had a big black concrete veranda that swept around the front from the steps by the door to the side where it was girded by a dense hedge. It was Johnny's custom to sit talking to her after dinner, on the sun-warmed concrete, his fingers caught in the grillwork of the railing.

She was tall and stately, with short white hair. She wore slacks and chain-smoked. She talked about Dorothy, the weather, bad children. From a figurine that sat on her windowsill, Johnny learned the lesson of the three monkeys.

He didn't get it....

She was in advertising, and because they were friends, he got to play with her samples: guns, soldiers, trucks, cars, dolls, rings, pipes, fountain pens. She was generous.

One day he stole an armful of empties from the cellar and smashed them on her veranda, one by one. He ran home, crouched on the black and white tiles of the living-room floor, and told Ma that their neighbor wasn't his friend any more. She was a Hell Lady.

Dorothy dragged him into the cellar. She stopped his screams with a bar of laundry soap.

---

[15] C.K. Clarke, "The Detection of Mental Defect in School Children," The Canadian Journal of Medicine and Surgery 21 (June, 1907): 343-48).

Pioneers of Alienation

*****

A middle-aged man lived next door.

He liked to cut the grass topless. He used a hand mower. He was better-looking than Charlie. Charlie had a gut. The alky!

Johnny waited for the grass to get nice and long. He waited for HIM....

Johnny walked onto the grass, into the path of the blades, and stood, till the man stopped.

The sweat matted the fur on his breasts and under his arms. He bent down and asked, what was wrong?

Johnny smacked his face. Again, and again.

The man laughed.

What was that for?

Johnny didn't want to say. It was for making him want to fuck him.

He was just a little boy....

*****

Dorothy heard him rouse himself and pound against the bars of his crib. Like the inmate of a prison, or an asylum....

She elbowed Charlie.

Tell him to shaddup.

Grunting, he rose.

When Johnny, standing up in his crib, saw his father lumber toward him, his pajama bottoms loosely tied below his crack, he peed himself....

Get back to bed.

No.

Charlie belted him. He saw stars. He dove under.

*****

Dorothy lay awake. She never knew it could be like this....

*****

The report of the First Annual Meeting of the Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene in Toronto contained SHOCKING REVELATIONS of the prevalence of insanity in the respectable contexts of home, school, and shop (173), and at Dr. Clarke's CLINIC.[16]

Colonel Thomas W. Salmon, Medical Director of the U.S. National Committee for Mental Hygiene, argued that because war and civilian neuroses were identical in their mechanism, the study of war would also benefit family life.

He commanded the Clausewitz of Alienation, to ARISE!

The neuroses were on the march, as lunatics adapted biologically, at the expense of society, and social and economic efficiency....

Salmon urged maintaining a vigorous wartime campaign against them, even in peacetime.[17]

War became the latest gauge of the prevalence of mental disease, since however many neuroses it revealed, they were many times more common in peace.

For Dr. Clarke war was less an outbreak of collective insanity than an opportunity to literally bring insanity to the front, by conscripting so many of the insane, who had previously found their niche in simple farm work or occupations of a routine nature.

War exposed the MAD, not just to enemy but also to friendly fire, surveillance and mind control....

Clarke celebrated what he considered war's great dividend, that the MAD would become useful, hewers of wood and drawers of water....

They'd all get manufacturing jobs....

Meanwhile, the mental hygiene movement was on war-time footing in a glow-ball struggle against insanity.

They were quacks....

---

[16] "(Report of the) First Annual Meeting of the Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene," Canadian Journal of Mental Hygiene 2 (1920), 172-81.

[17] C.K. Clarke, "Mental Hygiene in Canada," The Lancet 1 (June, 1923): 1139-41.

Thing Street Asylum

*****

Hydro glimmered from the ceiling in the Lobby. Charlie staggered from the Great Dining Hall where Lisa Gordon had listened to Mickey Mouse jazz in the 30s.

The alky....

She still came, for coffee and liqueur(s).

He didn't recognize her....

After The War, they made HIM a DRUMMER....

He was on business....

Tonight, he was ON THE TOWN....

He passed the mile-long registration desk and entered the hall where a hundred elevators waited. He boarded one, and rode to the thousandth floor.

In his room he removed his coat and collapsed on the unmade bed, awaiting his pals from the bar.

They were card sharps....

He loosened his tie, unbuttoned his cuffs. He looked out a window at a dirty garage. The Venetian blinds rolled down over everything.

At the head of the bed hung a portrait of anonymous mountains and a carefully labeled Dadanian Pacifier Locomotive....

It had been painted on velvet, by the house painter of the Group of Seven-Eleven. Stunning!

Somebody knocked.

Charlie got up and admitted them. They exchanged terse greetings and arranged themselves on the bed. They had B.O. They needed a shave. They resembled Lawrence Tierney. They held the cards.

The gray light filtered through the blinds over the gray garage. He was losing. He thought they were employees, the way they took his money. He was drunk, his head ached....

You lost a lotta money tonight, buddy.

Yeah, how much diddy lose?

Two hunnerd an twennyfive bucks.

He sat on the unmade bed. Suddenly, he realized.

MOUNTIES!!!

They lunged.

Charlie's first thought was for his ass, but he must not have been their first rape that evening, because they only tied his arms behind his back with lamp cord, while beating him in the face with a Gideon's Bible.

Charlie blacked out, his face a bloody pulp.

They dragged him out of the room, down the hall, into one of the vacant elevators. They descended to street level and went out the front doors, Charlie propped between them. The porter stared.

In the alley behind The Hotel he recognized the garage. It looked blurry. They threw him into a bunch of garbage-cans.

He surfaced as the sun rose. Eight o'clock. He zipped up his fly and wiped his nose on a piece of Kleenex they'd left in his pocket. He entered through the Employees' Entrance and took a Service elevator to his room, and washed his face.

Later a friend from the Company loaned him enough money to get home. He took the supper train.

Dorothy was disappointed to find Charlie home again so soon. The Convention was supposed to have lasted all week. She couldn't mistake the bruises, all over his face!

To think he could have been killed!

He spent the rest of the week in bed.

She wished she had someone to go to the movies with. Sharon thought she was CRAZY to go back to Charlie, after The War.

Sharon was independent. She worked for Lady Eatone. She always looked swell.

The Lesbo....

The Alky....

*****

Pioneers of Alienation

Dorothy was beat. She wore her tired pink dress and stumbled around the kitchen making dry hamburgs. She took the pepper from the spice rack over the counter, sprinkled some onto the meat sizzling in the pan on the Moffat....

Elvira ran in through the front door.

Mother! Mother! She hadn't stopped to wipe her shoes.

Haven't I told you?

Read this. She extended a wrinkled copy of the News.

Dorothy sank onto the stool beside the stove. She wiped her hands on her apron. Her hair was mussy, she was sweating.

She read:

Bulletin!!!
Her Gracious Majesty
the Queen of Dadania
received Today
the
Adoration
of Her
Grateful Dominion

The article related that Her Majesty and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh (aka Silly Sausage and Cottage Roll) would occupy the Royal Suite in The Hotel.

Dorothy looked up, into the face of her daughter. The grease hissed in the pan.

So?

The Queen. The Queen.

Yeah.

Elvira grabbed the scrap of paper from her mother and skipped into the living-room. She wanted to read about the light, the color, the Big Hotel where the Queen stayed. She flung herself onto the French Provincial chair. It farted.

The meat was burning.

*****

Cosima rocked beside the piano. The room was still. There was a stunted tree in the window. Dorothy and Charlie sat on the sofa. Elvira, Victor and Johnny fondled their presents.

Johnny got a radio.

Elvira got a used copy of Town Without Pity, very foxed. She flung herself onto the sofa, balling, startling the Pomeranian, which immediately began to bark.

Victor got an erection.

Merry Christmas.

*****

Elvira watched Johnny playing school on a crate under the lilac tree by the den window. The sissy....

Victor was in Cadets. He liked uniforms and marching. He got all greasy fixing cars with other juvenile delinquents. They drove to bars, and got drunk.

The alkies....

When they were drunk enough they raided the local nunnery. On the way back they smashed up their cars and staggered around puking in the road.

Victor got his picture in the paper. Pissing on the fire-escape.

*****

Spring, the lilacs stank like piss. They noticed where the large, grape-like clusters had wilted and turned brown. Late spring....

The trunk was gray, smooth as a forearm, the veins and sinews showing through the thin bark like skin....

Elvira and Johnny squatted on crates, scribbling in a diary Dorothy bought, after watching pre-code movies in the 30s.

It was empty....

Neither noticed as their father moved into the frame. They were startled when the horrible little boy next door hopped the fence and ran off with Johnny's page, laughing hysterically. Johnny pretended to ignore him, the coward.

They were still too stunned to notice as Charlie shook his fist in the window that reflected a darkening sky. He stormed through the house, through the kitchen and out the back door into the yard. He grabbed him by the arm with one hand, and tore off the branch of the lilac tree with the other.

Elvira was a drama queen. She screamed rhythmically.

Charlie dragged Johnny after the brat who fled screaming before them through the suburb. The little monster was too fast.

Charlie staggered, clutching his chest. Johnny escaped.

He met Elvira screaming and tearing her hair on the crate under the mutilated lilac tree. The book was still open. The pages rustled in the wind. He gently closed it.

It's all right, he said.

No, it wasn't all right....[18]

---

[18] A letter to his father from Mr. Cooper's former employer, dated November 25, 1910, indicates how a man could accidentally be labelled by his own father -- with disastrous consequences. The supervisor's impression of his employee's character seemed to alter as he wrote. He "remembered" that he began to suspect that something was the matter with Mr. Cooper when the latter, who had been a "capable" teacher for the first month of his contract, stated his intention to quit on November 30. However this impression was strengthened by the father's enquiry, for the supervisor now feels that if he had received it earlier he would have "dismissed [him] at once." He similarly revises his opinion of Mr. Cooper, retroactively: "I have thought for some time that there was something wrong with him." Nothing is made of the young man's expressed aversion to "school work," his own opinion that "it would be better for the children and himself for him to quit."

The supervisor was evidently the source of the father's information, related to the Asylum authorities, that his son had "acted queer" in school. He related the children's stories of the young man forgetting that the had asked them to stand up, laughing without reason, gazing out the window, etc. He also made a great deal of his "walking along an untravelled and swampy side-road," and lecturing (the very evening of the day of writing) in the Town hall on "the advantage of 60 acre farms instead of 160."

The supervisor conspired with the father against the son, warning the father that Mr. Cooper probably had no intention of going home to stay, and intended to begin a lecture tour as soon as possible. He urged the father to "come right down and I will do all I can to help you to get him to go home," and offered to concoct a lie that a portion of Mr. Cooper's pay had had to be withheld -- "that we were a little short" -- in order to deprive him of the means of going away.

The father seems to have been at once authoritarian and sickly. Mr. Cooper wrote Dr. Stead regarding his problems with his father, in particular his frustration at his father's "bossing." According to the son, the father's "determination to boss me" has given the latter "more trouble ... than by all the ministerial difficulties that fall to his lot" and possibly "wrecked" both their lives. He tries to enlist Dr. Stead on his behalf, to influence his family to allow him more freedom "to complete and execute my will," and to loan him "enough money to carry through my lecture, possibly in Toronto."

In a letter to Dr. C.K. Clarke of December 12 1910 Mr. Cooper's father expressed misgivings about how much his son's doctors had been influenced by information from himself. Dr. Clarke replied on December 13 merely that the young man was suffering from dementia praecox ("a well defined mental disease") and that his prognosis was "very doubtful." The father wrote Clarke again on January 9, 1911, and stating more explicitly his concern that his previous information was in its "very nature ... a one-sided statement -- not a biography so much as a selection of peculiarities." The same could be said of so many case histories! He proceeded to list his son's many virtues, his intelligence, his capacity for fiercely loyal friendship, his generosity, his thoughtfulness, etc.

This second letter to Dr. Clarke seems to have been precipitated by statements that Dr. Stead, who had examined Mr. Cooper for the Conference Report, made in front of the young man's mother and the mother's close friend, a professor at the university. Stead had described Mr. Cooper as "inferior in native and acquired endowment." The father was as offended by this as the mother, and insisted that "in the range of his sympathies and interests [his son] was superior rather than inferior." Having heard nothing from his son, and confident that his son would have forgiven him by now, he wondered if his letters had intercepted, as "not considered passable" [sic]. Of course, they had. Clarke replied by asking him to ignore the issue of his son's resentment altogether, as "just an outcome of the disease," and by dismissing all of his son's letters as "so insane that they would cause you pain rather than satisfaction." The effect of Clarke's diagnosis is to utterly dismiss Mr. Cooper's point of view by reducing it to a "symptom." He subsequently has nothing to say -- or write.

Yet these letters are an eloquent indication of Mr. Cooper's state of mind -- and his reasons for it. Like Mr. Ross above, he keenly appreciated the disastrous implications of having been committed, and worked off some of his despair in a series of metaphors:

> My career hence-forward will be somewhat like the steam engine's flash-light: travelling on, on, on, and never stopping.
> Or better, like the man lost in the woods and travelling in a circle. Again, like one who, without compass, might attempt to cross Lake Superior from Duluth to the Sault in a row-boat. Or to be plain, like one who, with all things necessary to reach the desired end, deliberately takes the key that should open the door of his prison and throws it out the window.

The tenor of all of these comparisons is the long, slow passage of time bringing about nothing -- except loss, ruin, extinction.

To write his father on January 5 1911, he had to ask Attendant Johnston for pen and paper. It is odd to think of the authorities supplying the materials for a letter they intended only to intercept -- or dismiss as "insane." The son's concern to point out that by calling his father's letter "interesting" he was not being sarcastic, like a "newspaper or marginal reader" returning a rejected manuscript, seems instead to highlight the possibility. Moreover, the denial momentarily puts the father in the position of the rejected author, the likely vengeance of a son humiliated partly for his literary pretentions. Mr. Cooper proceeds to hints at more serious sexual matters which his father, a minister, had been unable to address or had failed to recognize because "you preachers, fire-men trying to extinguish the Burning Bush ... you preachers are good fellows: but you don't kn(own) the whole cheese."

In his admission narrative Mr. Cooper had dramatized the negative role of a particular physician. He concludes this letter to Dr. Stead with a bitter "final suggestion" that he show his letter to Doctor McKay, evidently for him to show to his "rival practitioner" Dr. Ross, to correct what

Pioneers of Alienation

*****

Dorothy and Charlie were fighting.

Charlie was going bald. His blue eyes were bloodshot. Dorothy had stretch marks.

I wish you'd talk to Jack. Jack went to AA, joined the Navy. He was cured.

Forget it.

He slammed the empty glass down on the table and staggered into their bedroom. Dorothy cringed in the big black chair beside the fireplace, as he slammed the dresser drawer. Leaving.

*****

Johnny rode to school with Elvira, in the neighbor's Volkswagon.

At the door of the low building, the car broke down. Johnny waved goodbye. She waved back, and ran to the other side of the building.

Elvira was in High School; Johnny was in Kindergarten.

He walked alone, up the side-walk.

Kindergarten had double doors, steel sheets that flashed open and shut, like Moloch cleavers. He clutched the handle, a long chromium tube, and dragged one open enough to squeeze through, before they castrated him.

Inside he hung his coat on a hook screwed into the concrete, within reach of dwarfs.

Past the vestibule, he entered a cavernous chamber with figures from the Cabala etched upon the floor. Boys and girls stood about, staring vacantly into space. They pretended to be playing.

Near the blackboard diminutive tables and chairs had been set up. Serious children were stringing beads. They would raise half-finished strands into the air, vying for appoval, only no one was there.

Occasionally a little boy left the table to pee, his strand forgotten in his fist.

The teacher picked beads out of the urinal.....

Cla-ass! They sang. Somebody farted. Johnny said, singing gave him gas.

They stood him in the corner.

*****

Autumn. Dirt, death, decay. He kicked the leaves into fountains of bloody color. The dry ones crackled. He enjoyed trampling them.

Halloween. He dressed as a pirate. Elvira helped him with his costume. She went as a ballerina. Elsewhere.

---

he, Mr. Cooper considers his excessive "veneration for the superior wisdom of his rival practitioner." He refers to Ross as "the fatty who will always regard [himself] as a graduate masturbate" [sic].

Of his all his physicians Dr. Ross incurred his special enmity for making insinuations about his sexuality. He alleged that when he was coming down with typhoid fever he consulted Dr. Ross who "advised that my penis be circumcised." A little later he blamed Dr. Ross for inadequately helping him, when he was "a nervous little book-worm who had not masturbated twenty times in the unusually brief period in which I was a victim of that inevitable youthful danger." It is unclear whether he was angry at Ross for diagnosing him (and stigmatizing him), for not diagnosing him sufficiently or in time to prevent further danger, or for not allaying fears based on (false?) notions that "seminal fluid was extracted from the brain," that such emissions were "liable to decrease the brain power," etc. It seems likely though that he blamed his present mental condition on a habit of masturbation which he felt Dr. Ross had not adequately helped him to cope with or control.

Mr. Cooper's letter suggests that he was dogged by fear and anger that his masturbation had led or at least significantly contributed to his present problems -- and a desire to deny that he was a masturbator at all. Toward the end of the letter he inconsistently asserted that "Dr Ross, being one of these individuals who live on superficialities, does not know an earnest young person when he sees one. He took me for a masturbate." At the same time he believes masturbation, either real or alleged, figures prominently in his case: "so long as you agree with him, I shall be force to let the people here do as they will with me." He intuits (correctly) hat his letter might be used against him: "I know damned well that the expression I am penning this morning may, very likely will, result in my being detained in this here beauty-parlour for an indefinite period."

Mr. Cooper was released on probation in the summer of 1911. On August 5, 1911 his mother wrote the new Superintendent, Dr. Forster. She thanked him and his staff for her son's recovery, but expressed bitterness about Dr. Stead for "the cruel things he said to me on Christmas day 1910." Harvey Clare, an assistant, finally wrote an apology on August 8, 1911.

Mr. Cooper subsequently worked as a deck-hand on a Great Lakes freighter. For a few weeks he did well. Something, however, happened to him in Detroit. He disembarked and took to the road, eventually winding up with family friends in Boston. His mother retrieved him in very bad shape, and the family wrote to Dr. Forster to take him back as quickly as possible. He replied on January 19, 1912 that he thought the best place for their son was the London Asylum, with its "many avenues for occupation." Ironically, or tragically, the file contains a letter from that institution, requesting that Mr. Cooper's case notes be transferred. The letter is signed by Dr. Stead. Dr. Forster replied, rather waspishly observing that "the patients at that time had better histories written on them than Mr. Cooper."

Thing Street Asylum

When Johnny's party ended he stood outside the double doors and watched his schoolmates ride off. He'd missed his ride.

Passing parked cars, he felt bad.

They were other people's rides.

He went ahead into the dark. He was frightened and the hem of his cape caught on the leaves, like someone there. He found the path, and ran.

The leaves wanted to screw him. He cried.

*****

Sawdust, paste. Thin squares of sticky paper glued to pink sheets. Clothes, fingers painted.

Silence, when the spinster moved her chair into the middle of the cabalistic circle and stared, catatonically.

Endless lectures on grooming. How to stand, your thumbs on the seam of your pants, the pleat of your dress.

How to hold your back straight, chest out, for the Queen of Dadania....

*****

You will look back on childhood as the best years of your life.

Shaddup!

At the end of the year, he walked home.

I'm glad it's over.

He heard no answer.

When he looked back, Butch was examining something on the side-walk.

A pretty little butterfly. With an undeveloped brain....

Here Johnny, I'll catch it.

He held out his hand with the butterfly. He'd crushed it.

Clumsy oaf! Johnny smacked him.

Kill it.

N-n-no.

Johnny stomped it under his boot. Butch stared. They resumed their walk.

*****

He sat at the kitchen table, pretending to read.

How many quarrels had he fought there, in the nook, because there wasn't any room, and he couldn't escape, without displacing everyone else on the bench?

The china plaque commemorating Baden-Powell (Reliever of Ladysmith)....

The brass candlesticks on the windowsill....

They'd anchored him, through storms....

He heard voices. Dorothy and Elvira, the advancing storm....

Dorothy wore an ugly, brown, old-fashioned, dykey suit she'd borrowed from Sharon, that clashed with her daughter's neon mini.

They were mother, and daughter.

They were in the kitchen. They couldn't see him, in the nook....

Plaque, candlestick....

Horsburgh, Elvira hissed.

Dorothy blanched.

He brought blacks into church....

Who got white girls pregnant....

No, they were already pregnant. Like me!

(The meat was burning....)

Windowsill....

*****

Elvira went to University.
The pseudo-Gothic limestone pile of Crankase College grazed the trees on the snowy field. The campus sloped, insensibly, into the river....

Hydro poles with latticed lamps leaned at irregular intervals.

Elvira laughed at her Chinese physics professor mincing along the river in a pearl-grey frock-coat and regulation Axis pince-nez, his parasol cocked over his shoulder, like an assault rifle.
The snow fell softly, from pillows burst in a heavenly dorm.

He was distressed, for the snow was less predictable than rain and twisted about under his shelter.
He reminded her of prints at New Moon Garden. Kitsch!

Carpathians lurched along the bank like abominable ice-men. Drunk. She hated to admit, she knew some of them personally.
They swarmed under the bridge, around a pseudo-classical Hydro pole.
One of them even saluted her.
She glanced behind her, at the professor tottering up the hill, his umbrella submissively closed. She watched his black figure retreat into the snow.

Elvira appeared on the cover of the next issue of the Souwestole News, Woman Lost in Ice Field, in her underwear.
Never enough life-boats.

Dorothy hoped she had health insurance.

*****

Elvira took the train to The City.[19]
She was reading Sister Carrie.
She rented a room in The Hotel.

*****

Every time he went to the bathroom, he trod on his father's nightmare, the creaking stairs of the jerry-built house his father made payments on, working for Libby's.
Ma made the last, working for the Eye Doctor.....
She cried when Johnny kept her awake, and she had to get up in the morning....
There wasn't enough money. There wasn't any privacy.
The front-door opened straight into the bathroom. His sister told him to shut it. He always forgot.
His steps were drumbeats, the upstairs door-knob crashed into the bathroom door-knob, as he mounted.
Like cymbals. Or castanets....
It was impossible to keep them apart.

*****

The kitchen nook was so narrow his father made a table for it.
Johnny couldn't cut his pork chop without elbowing a sibling.
They came to blows.

[19] Arguing for a psychiatric clinic in Toronto, Dr C. K. Carke brutalizes the mentally ill of the metropolis, describing "the flocking of mental weaklings to the city" and urging that "something must be done to meet the requirements of the situation" (1908, 3). Evidently a metropolitan magnet for "mental weaklings," the city needs a psychiatric clinic, which he asserts would "relieve the situation materially," but without which "we cannot cope with the difficulties which face us" (1908, 3). Much of Clarke's subsequent writing is devoted to dramatizing and problematizing the city's needs, and the clinic's ability to supply and even solve them; the Asylum proper dwindles into insignificance beside the psychiatric clinic, a "virtual asylum" with the whole city, if not the nation, potentially its "patient."

The nook did it.

*****

If only he could have been sensual, lazy, industrious, and happy.

Other boys were. Look at Butch, and Bruce.

True, they were failures.

He remembered how he wrestled Butch, who always wanted to be a doctor, but giggled so hard he came.

Then Butch drew lots and had to wrestle his buddy, Bruce.

Moose Caribou said, he didn't have to, if he didn't want to, but Butch (stoically) said he wanted. He handed his glasses, to Johnny.

They were perfectly matched lizards, iguanas, all ferocious ruffs and fringes, battling it out.

The heel, balls, and toes of Butch's feet were black as a child's who'd been playing in mud. He couldn't keep his head out of his buddy's crotch, his pits.

Johnny Craven giggled from the edge of the mat.

Pull his hair! Pull his hair! Bite him!

His buddy was a komodo....

*****

Butch and Bruce took the same courses on rotary. Johnny sat behind them. Or facing, the desks arranged in a semi-circle around the god-like Kowalski.

Rotary meant they each had a home room. Butch and Bruce's was always the same, where they assembled for Opening Exercises: The Lord's Prayer, God Save the Queen....

Dah-dan-i-ah!

All hard for you, we stand....

They sat, for the Bible Reading, and the Announcements....

Johnny had to do the reading, after he came to school late. It was better to stay home. At least if he stayed home, he wouldn't have to serve a detention. When he refused, the white-haired principal and his nervous assistant expelled him. He wouldn't go....

I'll have you blacklisted in every school in Dadania. You'll never study again.

Call the cops.

Insensibly, he left.

To reinstate himself he had to do the Bible Reading, indefinitely. He noticed the copy of the Bible which the secretary with glasses-on-a-rope handed him at the microphone, broken into 60-second sound-bites, suitable for Opening Exercises.

Home Room. Since Butch's was across the hall, Johnny was away from his own home room till the very last moment. Rotary went with home room.

They wandered through the maze of locker-lined halls, pursuing knowledge, a shadow.

Truth and beauty swayed scythe-like, under the books on Butch's pumping thigh....

Opening Exercises....

Rotary....

They were bused in, from concessions. They relaxed in home room with god-like Kowalski, the dimpled history teacher. They sprawled on the floor beside their desks, in white turtle-necks, gray flannels, and desert (dessert?) boots.

Long legs crossed while he lay on his back, Bruce's slacks rode high up, exposing hairy calves....

Butch sat on the floor beside him, hugging even hairier ankles, in wrinkled gym socks. In warm weather he smelled: life-buoy, perdition....

Two minutes to nine....

He found the place, he started to read....

Be still, and know that I am God....

*****

Butch lived in a California-style bungalo on a concession by the river, near the Maypole City Golf & Country Club.

Johnny liked to follow Butch. To smelly basketball games observed from the balcony of the high school gym. He dared not cheer.

They projects together. Finally he followed Butch home, from the Carnegie Library. An adventure!

Pioneers of Alienation

They walked through town to the edge of the little east-end ghetto where the town's blacks had lived since the underground rail-road and Uncle Tom. They passed, respectable middle-class white boys, in front of ramshackle houses with rickety porches, across mangy front lawns without side-walks.

By the modern rail-road of the DPR they took a short-cut, and were stopped by a portly official who demanded to know what they were doing on private property. They were taking a short-cut. He let them proceed to the dirt road, where in a few minutes they hitched a ride the rest of the way.

Butch's parents were away. A couple of great labs ran barking from the cemetery by the river. They'd been digging.

The driveway was full of dog-shit....

The kitchen was full of dirty dishes.

He surprised Bruce sprawled on the sofa, in the empty-looking living-room, in flannels and socks, writing an essay on Jethro Tull for the History Teacher. The TV was on, the sound off.

Through the empty window behind him Johnny saw where a few of the gravestones had collapsed....

Butch continued nonchalantly down the hall. Into his room. Their room. Johnny followed. He saw twin beds with purple bedspreads, and a big, bright-red basketball.

Then Butch changed his mind. Into his parents' room, where there was a big double-bed. The faint aroma of Butch's parents. The best view, of the cemetery....

Johnny sat on the edge of the bed with the clipboard covering his lap. The odor of sweat in the room. Butch pulled off his desert boots without untying them. Then he strode across the gray linoleum, leaving wet footprints. He flopped across the bed and laughed, swinging his legs so that the gray flannels rode up hairy calves. He rearranged something in his crotch, and giggled. Johnny steadied the clipboard in his lap.

When he emerged from the bathroom, where there was a library of Sports Illustrated behind the toilet, Butch was waiting.

He'd undone his shirt to the navel and was talking to his reflection with the door open, admiring himself in the mirror.

*****

Blond and thin, Johnny leaned over Butch, propped against his locker. Everyone else had gone home, for Christmas.

He hated Christmas....

Anger flickered over features like a girl's: shit-blond hair, watery-blue eyes, Lombroso features.

There was something the matter. He smelled the Men's across the hall. He even smelled his friend beside him.

Soap? Shoe-leather? Piss? Feet and ass?

All of the above?

Something else. Peculiar to him.

He thrust his hands into his pockets and stared at the red brick wall. Each of the lockers contained something special. He wanted his friend's peculiar combination.

The gray light filtered through the windows of the empty classroom. He walked to the door and gazed at the rows of desks. Nothing particular.

Nothing at all!

*****

What did you get me? Toreador pants?

Why should I get you anything? (He hated Christmas.)

I just thought.

He reached into his jacket pocket and produced a small rectangular coffin; he presented it to Butch.

A silver-shanked Parker fountain pen gleamed against the purple lining of its sheath.

Awe....

*****

Just himself and Ma in that jerry-built house. A bifurcated ghost, rattling and shrieking.

He typed. She shrieked.

Then she'd throw him out. And call the cops. Victor! Her GOON!

The great crises of his life were precipitated by typing!

Thing Street Asylum

He'd spend the night in Wacousta Park. On a stone bench, in the ridiculous Japanese Garden that was the Centennial Project of the Maypole City Jaycees. Those nights a dirty old man in a trench-coat wandered by. Like a zombie....

Johnny used to see him loitering about in the afternoon, on his way home through the park from school. The Principal....

Some nights Johnny slept right on the front steps of the school. Under the fake pilasters. Human sacrifice.

School was life....

He would wait till the janitor unlocked the doors, then go to his locker. There he would wait some more, till the women opened the cafeteria, when he could buy a cup of coffee.

The BOYS arrived at eight-thirty....

Their bus dropped them off behind the school, on the playing-field the Panthers shared with the pervs from the Public School across the road. They would cut through the vacant lot behind the portable classroom where Mr. Ewing taught Latin. Butch followed a little behind his leaner, longer, harder buddy.

Butch wore spectacles. Narrow black ones, then in grade twelve he bought a pair of owlish, designer frames, like Kowalski's. Butch was shit-blond. Bruce was taller and darker, but they always wore identical white turtle-necks, gray flannels, grass-stained desert (dessert?) boots. Loose cardigans, after their slumber-party....

They swayed gently advancing, binders on hips.

They were other people's rides....

*****

After the Men's Room, they went to their home room, or squatted on the floor. Their mouths level with the combination locks, hanging open.

When they looked up or laughed, the locks rattled.

With Johnny they made a trio.

The Three Monkeys: see, hear, think all evil.

The English Teacher floated past, waving her mystic female-symbol pendant. She wanted Johnny, for a part.

In English class she always saved Bruce the especially virile parts, the villain in Tennessee Williams' plays.

She said Bruce was a tall oak, which made Butch blush. He knew. He really was!

And Johnny? She howled laughing.

Johnny got weak parts. King Richard, The Reverend Mr Hale, The Chorus in Antigone. Even Yevtushenko in Translation (the city of yes, the city of no) for the grade twelve class.

She said Johnny resembled him, only Yevtushenko had broad shoulders.

Yevtushenko wasn't a fag.

They sat in the cafeteria. Bruce sat right on the table with his desert boots soiling the bench.

Dessert boots!

Bruce hitched his flannels high up over hairy calves.

Johnny sat watching them from behind.

He tried to make conversation only Butch wasn't good at it, being principally interested in sci-fi, and sports.

Johnny would try to make conversation. About Butch's Bulova watch. Where did he get it?

From his parents, for his birthday....

It was square and yellow. Johnny's was round, gold-filled, a self-winder. He'd bought it with the proceeds from his first job, flagging traffic on the four-oh-one. All that traffic, translated into the 21-jewel movement of his watch....

Who cares?

It was waterproof. Was Butch's?

Yeah, sure.

Did he wear it all the time?

Uh, yeah.

Even in the shower?

Why ask that? What a queer question!

Butch grabbed at the watch.

Johnny held it in his hand, like a dead cock.

*****

The cottage at Godsditch squatted on the cliff. The wind accelerated over Lake Urine. There was an airport. Left-over from the Commonwealth Air Training Program.

Icarus spattered his brains out, on the cliff.

Johnny saw a photo from the 50s....

Winnie the Pooh wagging his tail high atop the fuselage, of a drowned Cessna....

Pioneers of Alienation

*****

He and Victor opened the cottage after it had been closed for 15 years. Sold by their alcoholic father, to a crazy aunt who insisted the harmless doctor down the road was burying cancer germs in his garden. The neighbors strolling by on common property were communist spies!

No one went to the cottage as long as she lived.

Then she died.

Their father got a call from the doctor.

It was her....

Rotting....

A couple of saner aunts, their father's sisters, inherited the cottage, along with fruit jars of placebos....

And subway tokens....

She'd died fearing nuclear attack.

*****

They broke in through a window, because the keys had been lost among all the hoardings. They never found them....

On the glass someone had scrawled in the dust: This is a Haunted House! They raised it over their heads as they entered.

It was....

*****

As as if he'd set a conch to his ear and heard....

O roar again....

Waves crashed on the beach....

Oceans of kisses....
Oceans of love....

Children screamed, under the cliff....

Victor and his friends were in town when he noticed. When they returned he didn't tell them.

He heard voices.

It was an echo.

When he woke up in bed the next morning, in the room at the top of the stairs, the exposed boards under the roof and the unfinished walls were familiar. His brother explained that he had slept there, between his parents, when he was small.

Early next morning they went scrounging for wood around the neighboring cottages. In garages and carports deserted since last fall, a baseball or the rusty grill of an old barbecue made them feel nostalgic. Then through the open curtain in the kitchen of the red-gabled cottage on the right, they glimpsed their aunt's paintings, that had hung on the wall in their kitchen when they were young. Through the flawed front-window of another cottage a distorted rocker appealed to them, its image still perfect in memory. Johnny stopped feeling guilty about robbing their woodpiles.

They had spotted (how could they miss) their aunt's hideous pink-painted wicker armchairs on the veranda of the doctor their aunt had accused of burying cancer germs in his garden. She hadn't been far off, Johnny thought. They tore the screen getting them out, their wooden feet as sharp as claws.

Trophies!

*****

They rocked in front of the fire while Victor's friends saw a show in town.

The Sound of Music was always playing in Godsditch.

Johnny sipped Southern Comfort from a plastic yellow juice glass that his brother had already refilled twice. When he asked him how he liked it he lied that it was OK.

Through the syrupy sweetness it bit him making him writhe inside. Victor assured him it would get better after a few glasses. It already was.

Victor wondered aloud how many Midases had sat there watching the fire. He stood up and removed the screen bent by the weight of all the thighs and asses that had pressed against it, unable to get warm....

He knocked ashes and coal through the grate with the end of the poker. He threw on more wood, from the mill....

*****

Victor went upstairs to the cold-water washroom, the marble sink plundered by his ancestors from the Health Springs Hotel that fell off the cliff in World War I.

The water lurched and spluttered through the pipe. It had been shut off fifteen years ago.

It ran red, like blood. The bad, pent-up blood of fifteen years, coughing and spluttering through the pipe....

Suddenly Johnny stood up in front of the fireplace. He heard water falling. There it was. Again! Louder than the water coughing and spluttering in the pipe. Farther away. A river? A lake?

The hills were alive with....

Southern Comfort!

He ran into the kitchen, determined to tell his brother, even if he laughed at him.

He got half-way up the stairs, and collapsed. Laughing, himself.

From the landing, his brother told him.

He was drunk....

The alky!

*****

The Snopeses owned Maypole City Transit. Service stopped abruptly at 6. There was nowhere to go anyway, except to the Fox or the Century (opposite one another) on King Street. Hockey games in winter. The parking lot was full of pick-ups.

At least he knew how to ride a bike, even if he was slow. He had trouble learning how to tie his shoe. His name was the last to appear on the teacher's list of shoe-tiers. It would never have appeared at all, except his brother taught him a special technique.

Cheating....

The only other thing he was good at was reading, because Great Aunt Marion coached him.

A lunatic....

He was advanced, but he thought he was retarded. He had no sense of direction, he couldn't count....

It would have been a liability, detasseling corn and flagging traffic.

His tax refund was a double windfall, extra money and a way out of another job. He bought a ten-speed from the L.J. Mulvern Company, the store crowded with sporting equipment and religious medals.

He squandered his allowance....

He passed afternoons and weekends riding. There was a French town ten miles from Maypole City.

There was a Bank of Montreal on the corner across from Halfway House. The barns had French names.

The bells of a baroque church heralded Montreal.

If he'd known, he 'd have blown out his brains....

He was surprised by water. Real, and implied by the steep dikes along the river, canals.

Near the lake, it threw him. A snake!

Dead, from the tire tracks across its length. It revolted him, but he circled around to study it, diamond-flecked.

There were tiny cemeteries in the middle of the fields, but others had been m oved, their stones lined up along the road, as if for review. They died young.

He rode to Herring Cross to see his English Teacher, in a big dusty farmhouse. Sometimes he stayed over. Going home in the early morning the police stopped him by the Dadania and Dominion Sugar Company and requested his papers. When they asked where he'd been wouldn't say. They threw his card in the mud and stomped on it..

*****

Victor dragged him into the lake. He wanted him to swim to the sand bar. Or maybe not....

He swam and swam, trying to transform himself into a waterwheel, a turbine, but it was too much for his imagination.

He wasn't a Hydro Plant.

He lost power, and floundered.

He expected to see stars, black out, and die. Then his feet touched sand.
He had been on the sand bar all along. Victor laughed. He'd drowned.

*****

His last night at Godsditch they'd been a family. His sister came from The City. He came with his brother and his nephew. His sister-in-law drove with his niece in the convertible. Ma drove alone.

*****

In the red-gabled cottage next door his brother and sister-in-law partied with another young couple and their friends. The young man was named Gordon.
He was telling a story. When he (Gordon) was a teenager his father forced him it shower with his sister and his mother.
Cruel boozy laugher, all around.
Johnny fled, as the teen-aged Gordon had wanted to.
His brother pursued him into the cottage and demanded to know why he'd left.
That's my business.
What's that, Johnny?

*****

His sister stabbed the air before Victor.
She was tired of him, choosing the words that would cause the most pain. Like a child, deliberating at a candy counter. Poison counter, she meant.
A moth flitted across the ceiling, and rang softly against the globe, casting shadows over the dishes drying on the commode.

Like someone tapping his fingernail against the rim of a glass....
Nobody did that anymore....

Their mother was trying to sleep upstairs.

*****

He stepped out the back door, shutting the screen behind him. From Gordon's, he heard voices raised against a background of laughter.
Bats hunted bugs in the twilight.
The lane was dark. Overhead the branches were still but nervous, waiting to scratch him the way they scraped his brother's car.
Good for them.
From the end of the lane he could see a few lights glowing on the runway. Farther along, a Lancaster on stilts reared up like a dinosaur. In the bright rectangle of an open hanger half-naked mechanics worked on a plane like doctors with larger-than-life instruments.
Preparing a Cessna, for Night Flight....
At the end of the airport road he turned right onto the highway. He didn't have much hope of thumbing a ride till after Godsditch. The highway swooped across the deep gorge of the river, and the cars followed it, unlikely to stop. There was the lane to Tiger Dunlop's tomb, high up the other side of the same ridge that truncated the streets of Godsditch, which emanated from downtown like the spokes of a wheel.
Tiger got drunk one night and switched the plans of Godsditch with Gulch, giving Godsditch a flat. Johnny cut through the rim, avoiding the downtown axis, all greasy spoons and smoke-shops. He wondered how Gulch turned out. A hill-top garrison in the middle of a prairie?
He'd walked all the way to Hayfield before he caught his first ride. A carload of delinquents, going to Fairforth. The first time he hitch-hiked, excluding that time with Butch. Certainly the first time alone. There was nothing to it. They played the radio loud. They drove him ten or twenty miles. He only had another hundred and fifty to go.
He was walking at dawn on the gravel shoulder, wondering at the callously cheerful birds and watching for his brother's pick-up, when a powder-blue Lincoln slowed down and pulled over.

He ran up, scraping the gravel. He pulled at the chrome handle but it resisted. The man at the wheel, in a rumpled suit, bespectacled, long-haired, gazed at him, then he pressed the switch, releasing the door.

He seemed civilized. He explained that he didn't normally pick up things like this, but Johnny looked like such a nice young man....

He noticed that he had some scraps of paper with him. He had. Before leaving he'd grabbed the last things that mattered. His poems.

He supposed he was a student. He was. He didn't explain that he'd been truant for the last six weeks....

He noticed the pin on his lapel. Reach For The Top. He watched the show...

Johnny was beginning to think he watched everything....

He supposed he was off to his girlfriend's for the weekend....

He studied his face in the automatic mirror. Electric rotors quietly adjusted it to reflect Johnny's face in the passenger seat beside him.

He stammered (he hoped) like a corn-fed all-Dadanian boy, shy about his healthy heterosexuality. Only he didn't have any. He was fake....

He blushed and winced inwardly at the lie, glad at least that the man seemed to be looking in the mirror....

At road-kill....

Was his mother expecting him?

Was he trying to discover, if he'd be missed?

The powerful, powder-blue Lincoln....

Yes, she was.

The man smiled into the steering wheel. He explained that he was driving to Detroit. Where he owned a tool-and-dye factory. He said he had been to Flinton. To see his mother....

Sure....

Where was he heading?

Maypole City....

I'll take you right there, he said. He adjusted the mirror (remotely) to reflect a swathe of empty road. He knew how to choose them, even if they didn't know themselves. He released Johnny at an intersection only a few hundred feet away from his suburb in Maypole City. Orchard Heights....

Dadanians were nice.

They just weren't very friendly....

*****

He knew it was locked. He'd grabbed some worthless scraps of paper, but left his keys!

He threw them on the steps.

He needed a ladder. Mr. McCloud kept one in his shed next door. Which was never locked. The latch was a little rectangle of unpainted wood that turned on a nail. Sometimes the ladder was leaning out in the yard against the apple-tree. The McClouds' old dog was indoors or he would have barked by now.

He propped the ladder under the kitchen window, climbed up, and shoved. It heaved open and he rolled, over the windowsill, onto his father's table, into the nook.

Home.

It still felt crowded....

*****

Johnny was sick and tired. He'd let things go. He thought of his father and wondered if it was the family business. He listened intently, for voices.

The silence was deafening.

He wasn't even a successful schizophrenic.

The alky....

The clock on the wall in the kitchen ticked loudly while the pendulum twitched like the tail of a mad cat. He felt numb. He went out the back door and unlocked his bike from the clothes-line pole.

He rode out along the small lane that wound beside the river. On the outskirts of Maypole City he passed a row of markers that had been taken from an old farm cemetery and lined up along the road. He stopped his bike to read the names and dates. A third were French. So many died young.

He saw the knoll where the stones had been eroded by the river that flowed sluggish and brown beside it. The rest of the hill was ploughed.

A motorboat noisily rounded the bend, waving stars and stripes.

He continued till the soil blackened and the dikes rose beside the river. Now the land was below water level and had to be drained by the canals that webbed it. It was fertile.

He turned down a gravel road beside the canal. He was hot and tired. He had removed his shirt and his back was burning. He wheeled his bike onto the bank. He laid it there.

He sat and stared at the sky. The sun shone so brightly that the sky around it was as black as the soil. When he looked down again the gravel road was a white streak beside the black streak of the canal.

His head ached. He rode back on the gleaming bike on the other side of the river. His back burned and he was dizzy. He walked the bike into the yard behind the house and chained it to the clothesline pole.

He went in through the back door and into the bathroom. He opened the medicine cabinet and removed the bottle of sleeping pills. He wasn't sure how many he took. He was in pain and wouldn't hurt any more if he got to sleep. He went upstairs and lay down on the bed.

There wasn't any point in talking to his friend. He wished his sister could have been there but she was away. He slept.

*****

Through the Valium and sun-stroke Johnny saw Butch in his immaculate white turtle-neck, a tiny tennis-racket tattooed over his erect left nipple....

He saw the nerdy glasses, the ones he had before he got a pair just like Kowalski's, and the expression of utter disgust on Butch's handsome face as he muttered, o no, not her again!

*****

Johnny regarded the Doctor impassively. He hoped.
Just what were you trying to do.
Nothing. Get some sleep.
The Doctor gazed across the bed, out the window. There wasn't any view. A brick wall. He couldn't fathom him.
How many did you take?
Five, six. I'm not sure.
Not sure? Shouldn't you know?
I was in a hurry.
What for?
I'm not sure.
I think you should see a Doctor.
You are a doctor.
I mean a Shrink.

*****

Later Dorothy called on the Doctor. She used her most sympathetic voice. He was her Confessor.
He needs help. Doesn't he?
Don't we all.
Did you talk to him?
I referred him to a doctor.
You are a doctor.
Patients!
She thought he'd told her what to have. Not what she was.

Here. His English teacher gave him a thin booklet with a box of crayons taped to the front.
A coloring book?
Calligraphy. Reading other things' writing.

_____
You're welcome.

Write your name.
Why?
He indicated the book on writing.
The Doctor sighed.
You believe in this? But he wrote his name.

With the same smirk on his face. He regarded him as he lay in his purple-flowered pyjamas on the freshly-made hospital bed.

The French teacher had been watching his brother steadily. She looked away when something prehistoric flickered across his face. Had something entered the room? Was the doctor there?

The English Teacher was saying she'd seen Butch. Sitting alone. Like he'd been crying....

Butch always wanted to be a doctor.

Johnny watched his brother's face open and close. A fish everyone believed extinct had risen to the surface, snapped at something, and swum back into the deep.

Mme Sloboda had noticed it, too. She had to be off. She shook her finger at Johnny. She told his brother, it was nice to have met him. She left. A nice, plump, black-haired woman hugging her purse to her body as she navigated the hospital corridor, into a compact car in a sunny lot.

*****

Johnny couldn't see sunlight except for a strip high-up on the red brick wall. The laundry! He heard the exhaust from the dryers, like heavy breathing. Bruce worked there weekends. He and Butch discussed it in home room, before Opening Exercises. Grey flannels hitched high up over hairy calves. Humming Jethro Tull....

Bruce was buying a car. He and Butch took driving lessons twice a week. After he got his license, he parked his mother's Mustang beside the school. It had an immaculate white sports top. Johnny wanted Butch to take him for a ride, but they were other people's rides....

Mrs. Gibson was getting ready to go. Her things were all over. Her English books all over the floor. She stuffed them into her knapsack. Zen Master Swami Twoshoes said to keep your hands free. To light up a joint. Some of her books had been autographed by Alan B. Watts.

On the bed beside his purple-pajamaed leg were some crumpled student essays she'd removed to get at the books. He noticed Bruce's essay on Jethro Tull, which Kowalski admired so much. She wasn't looking....

He discarded it. After he'd mentally noted that she'd given it a C. His satisfaction was physical....

The English teacher found her crayons and handed them to Johnny. She bowed in the doorway, Zen fashion.

That left his brother. In a conservative suit. He'd beat him up for not obeying their mother. Johnny's classmates beat him up for being related. That smirk!

On the asphalt, the bully, amazed: He's your brother?

His brother used to swim in the river. Ski on it. He might have walked, it was so full of shit. Rotten vegetables from the Dadania Dominion Sugar Factory. Insipid, toxic river. Johnny had a childish fear of it. It howled under the grating. At night the holes in the grating grew manhole-sized beneath him. He clung to the iron edge. It severed his fingers.

In the lake in front of the cottage his brother's feet touched sand bars. They moved a little every year.

The fuselage of the WW II trainer had completely drowned again.

First in water, then in sand.

*****

Cosima wanted to give him something. Her wrists were bandaged.

They'd taken her Bulova.

Keep time? She thought of her German music teacher....

The metronome swung crazily!

In the clock in the hall-way, through smooth swings of the pendulum, the brass weight slowly, inevitably, sank.

Time....

To give Johnny her wedding ring!

On her dresser.... In a little blue box.... With a mother-of-pearl button....

He couldn't use it. He was Gay.

*****

Johnny went to University by train.

He was reading An American Tragedy.

He stepped off the train into a world so hot and humid that it didn't need rain. He was immediately soaked with sweat.

He called a cab from the small gabled station, and rode to the campus a few miles outside of town.

He stopped before an uninhabited, official-looking structure....

Pioneers of Alienation

He approached the double plate-glass door, then changed his mind, attracted to the prospect from a large raised concrete turret....

He mounted the stairs. He felt like Pizzaro stumbling upon the buried city of mad barbarians. A modern academic campus....

Pizzaro must've been crazy, too....

He felt lost....

He felt like jumping....

He found a cell with REGISTRAR stenciled in cuneiform on the door. He held it open for a fat bitch, in tear-shaped 50s glasses....

With what appearead to be fragments of human bone, embedded in the temples....

Vixen Foxy Weasel –Theatre!

He didn't recognize her....

He wandered down a corridor illuminated by rows of Mazda lamps, like the lights on the Ferris wheel. At the Circus....

Like a luxury liner....

One wall was made of white concrete blocks. The other was glass. Between them the floor was paved for miles, with red carpet.

At ten foot intervals were picnic tables, piled high with term papers and manned by bored-looking teachers who ostentatiously displayed tanned, hairy breasts between the lapels of open-necked polo shirts.

They were reading Thorstein Veblen.

They didn't get it....

*****

Johnny came home for Christmas.

He flung himself on the bed in his old room decorated with portraits of stars from the Silent era.

They were black and white pictures of Lillian Gish, Jackie Coogan, Conrad Veidt.

Erich von Stroheim. Gloria Swanson.

Pioneers!

Johnny swilled contraband beer and read about the last days of Vienna and Constantinople.

He waited for his sister to return from The City. How different her clothes were from what he saw on the street.

The last time Johnny saw her she wore a white shawl embroidered with spiders. Its tassels swept the floor....

He remembered how once she had walked into a room where he had been listening to a friend play the guitar. Johnny had glanced up from the floor.

I do like your shawl.

I do like it too. She used the same tone of voice, the same affectation.

Yes (he closed the chapter on Mayerling), she was a lady. She could have presided over a salon. She could have added light, sarcastic remarks to the repertoire of café society, etc.

Then they would have added that incriminating word unusual.

She did put on airs.

She could have hosted the weekly horror show.

He hated Christmas....

*****

The typical symptoms, in C. K. Clarke's diagnosis of developing dementia praecox in the case of A.B., included lack of judgment, mannerisms and stereotypies, lack of insight and abnormal point of view.

A.B. expressed his abnormality by thinking that sleeping late, having supper, and going to the movies were the proper way for the modern man to spend Saturday.

By 1915 Clarke considered dementia praecox a disease whose well-marked cases doctors could not afford to ignore. Its sure diagnosis made it one of the principal justifications of psychiatric opinion, to which the psychiatrist could appeal against other doctors' charge of being almost as big a crank as his patients. The more recalcitrant of them Clarke characterized in his Bulletin as hard nuts to crack (7). In The Detection of Mental Defect, Clarke concluded that the individual was the basis of study (348), but eradication was the object.

*****

Johnny had a bath. He was beating his meat when he heard the car in the driveway and the knock at the door. Ma abandoned whatever she was doing in the kitchen and nearly skipped through the living-room.

Elvira.

He gave them time to hug.

He heard the sound of luggage in the vestibule. Elvira's escort said something and even, he imagined, kissed her. Then he emerged.

Well. He kissed her on the cheek.

You look....

All wet. Her escort stood at the end of the room.

Of course. He's a young man. He's been grooming.

Johnny walked to the fireplace, smiled at her, noticed the shawl. She dismissed her escort. Dorothy mixed drinks.

They sat around the fire. He sat on the end of the couch by her chair. She leaned towards him, gazing earnestly, the corners of her mouth bent in a repressed grin.

I hope you won't mind if your present isn't wrapped this year.

No?

And won't fit under the tree.

Then it wasn't that powder-blue cashmere shortie....

No. She gave him a ticket.

*****

Johnny woke Elvira early in the morning, put something by Berlioz on the record-player, and brought her a cup of weak tea.

She sipped it in bed, her legs covered by an old quilt. Aunt Marion made it in Thing Street. Out of old rags. Shaped like light-bulbs....

They talked, The blinds brightened, and the light-bulbs faded.

He held a book in his hands, a bound copy of The Strand for the months of 1900. It shimmered with pictures of little girls in white. They smelled musty.

How are you for money?

I'm not buying any presents.

You should. Hand me my purse and I'll give you 20.

I don't like to.

Consider it a loan. She handed him the bill. He took it, and went to the door.

And turn that down. I can't stand his voice.

*****

It wasn't crowded.

They sat in the wrong car, on facing seats.

This is the car for St. Catharines. The City is back there. The conductor pointed down the aisle.

You told us to sit here.

Well. He recognized his mistake.

Be sure you go back there before you get off. Through the doors past the snack bar. That's where you get off. He came back three times, worrying.

*****

They arrived on a shunting train that seemed to take hours, just going through the suburbs.

He read the signs on an apartment building in an especially run-down inner-city neighborhood: Shoreview Apartments. Whoreview, he thought....

They walked upstairs into Union Station, into the heart of The City, into the light and the noise, hoping their legs wouldn't give out from under them in the middle of the traffic in front of The Hotel.

They passed Lady Eatone's marble and bronze-ribbed Emporium....

Elvira lived in the top of an old mansion. She had one large room done in mauve carpet with wicker chairs and her bed, a bamboo and reed platform raised two inches off the floor, piled high with satin pillows. In front of the window

overlooking the street she placed her plants, magnificent creatures whose leaves she sprayed every morning with an atomizer. In the wall opposite there was a kitchenette hidden behind louvered panels, and next to it a bathroom with toilet, sink, and tub crowding into one another. At the back of the room was the drafting table at which she designed her clothes, and beside it, on chrome racks, the samples she showed to clients from Quebec.

Elvira had Johnny take the bed (he was the guest) and she made herself a pallet on the floor. Johnny stayed there for a week, each day doing a little more on his own, ranging farther from the apartment, enlarging his world.

He spent hours browsing through the Royal Museum. He was fondest of a room in the Egyptian section, where he could go and sit on a bench by a glass case filled with small relics, buttons and trinkets, powder jars. He would muse about the things who had used and worn them, and wistfully imagine what it would be like to own one, just one scrap of Egypt.

Next he liked the entrance, where he could stand in the middle of the stone floor, the great dome high above, and watch the things moving on the balconies, coming down the stairs, swarming around him, oblivious.

The day before his departure he went with Elvira to a movie, a resurrection of Modern Times at The Egyptian. They sat together on plush chairs, eating popcorn and laughing with (never at) the sad clown who got caught in the cogs of a machine, and was arrested, for waving a red flag behind a street gang.

Finally they went to a restaurant. Drinking espresso, she said get away from home, from school.

Elope, she said.

*****

Next morning, over breakfast, they were talking volubly when Johnny noticed the News beside him. A picture of a hook-nosed man on the front page.

He looks like a Kike tailor.

Elvira stared at her plate for a moment.

I'm very sorry you would say that.

Johnny remembered her escort. He was angry. He gobbled the rest of his food. He excused himself to gather his things. They took a taxi to the train.

Goodbye. She sat sadly in the middle of the seat. He got his bag out of the trunk and went away.

*****

Vile Rail was crowded. Johnny had to stand between the cattle cars. When he finally got a seat he had to share it with a man in a Tyrolean hat on his way to The Flying Dutchman in London (Hoggtarry-ho).

You like Wagner?

O, yeah!

You know classical music?

I'm a great listener.

Where?

On records....

I wish I could take you to a performance. But I'm engaged. Tell me. Who do you do you like? Liszt? Brahms? Beethoven?

Mahler! I have his sixth. And the adagio from the ninth. Beautiful! But I have a lot of trouble finding him. And he's expensive.

Johnny made everyone sound like a hustler....

He looked at Johnny like it was a bad sign, but all he said was he'd heard about him, in the pension, in Vienna. Of course, Mahler died in 1911. Too soon!

Then came Hitler....

Anschluss....

It was hard....

The funny mustache....

The hand on his thigh....

It really was, hard....

*****

His mattress was lumpy.

When he changed his bedding he was horrified to see how dirty it was. Dark viscous stains spread over the fabric. He noticed that the sheets were stamped in red ink: Handy Haven.

Thing Street Asylum

He had been inside a Handy Haven. Once. It had a beverage room with little linoleum-topped tables built into the yellow wall. Between them juke boxes. Above them photos. He had seen oily-haired youths in farm-boots and fur-collars, straddling kitchen-chairs, listening to music that was popular....

In Alberta....

He wondered what sort of things had used his linen.

He had a fridge and on top of the fridge a white enamel hotplate that half worked. That didn't matter. One week he ate on $1.10.

He washed his dishes and his face in the sink beside the fridge. Baths could be had down the hall. The tiles bulged with dampness and cock-roaches....

He could have worked at a table which jiggled when he wrote and cramped his legs. Usually he lay on his bed and stared at the ceiling. In the morning he listened to the other roomers come in drunk. They staggered, banged their heads against the wall, rattled the door. He hated to enter the bathroom the next morning because someone had always either urinated and missed the toilet or vomited on the floor.

A motorcycle gang lived in a red-brick house around the corner. They roared downtown in a pack.

They staggered around, puked in the road.

Across the street from the red-brick house was an Anglican church that had been built in 1860. It had a stone steeple overgrown with vines. He set his watch by its chimes.

The house was only a block from downtown, where more students lived, in shabby apartments over thing stores. They were separate from the rest of the community in everything from the hours they kept to what they thought, they were social deviants and occupational wanderers, flitting from one garret to another....

He befriended a young man named Deane who lived downtown, over the Liquor Store. He was from Montreal, and abroad. He'd gone to school in the States, and talked like JFK. Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre was always panhandling downstairs. The nuns kicked her out, for that, and venery. She wasn't spiritual....

He recognized her....

She introduced him to Porko....

*****

Johnny met Deane in the lounge where students drank coffee and played records.

Deane had come in to write something, borrowed Johnny's beautiful Parker fountain pen, and asked him what was playing.

It was Leider eines fahrenden Gesellen.

Deane said Johnny had TASTE. He liked what Johnny liked....

He met Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre again, at a party. He wondered, who'd invited her....

She liked what he liked. He hated her face....

*****

Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre, Deane, and Johnny met one Monday morning in April.

Johnny went to the place above the liquor store after class. Deane was out, but the door was unlocked. He entered and made coffee.

It was their routine to brew a filter type, extravagant for them. Deane had read Lawrence of Arabia. Arabs sat around, drinking coffee.

Knock, knock! Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre! She was clutching a shot glass.

I came to borrow some sugar, she hiccuped. From Deane.

Come in and wait, if you want. He should be back soon.

She entered. She refilled the shot glass with booze from the flask on her hip. She slouched in Deane's rocker, belching.

Want some music?

I prefer Chopin. Johnny thought that wasn't an answer, or maybe a no....

The nocturnes, she gushed.

Fortunately Deane entered, hot from jogging. Sweat stained the pits of his Boston College T shirt and matted the thick fur on his thighs.

Johnny moved his chair closer to the bathroom door and smiled at his friend. He wanted to watch him change. Sometimes Deane stripped, put on his plaid bathrobe, and washed his hands at the tiny sink. He never tied the belt, so the robe fell open, showing his dick.

It was (usually) hard....

Johnny positioned himself, for the view.

I see I have company, Deane said. He went into the bedroom. Shit.

Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre came for sugar.

Deane emerged in his robe and said he'd join them after his shower. He locked the bathroom door.
Johnny turned unhappily to Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre.
From the bathroom they heard singing.
Does he do that often?
I wouldn't know.
Tell him I had to go. Thanks, for the sugar. Honey....

Johnny went into the kitchen, made a second cup of coffee, and gave it to Deane when he emerged in his bathrobe. They sat and talked with their feet propped up on the table.
Deane undid the belt, and his dick flipped out....

*****

He read Elvira's letter in the library.
They didn't communicate anymore, but she warned him not to take it so seriously.
Alienation....
Alright, he wouldn't....
He threw her letter in the garbage. He caught Porko staring at him. Porko was always there, reading other things' mail....
Campus bum! Never did any work, so far as Johnny knew.
Porko smiled as he limped away.

*****

Deane told Johnny about the trails where he hiked, the woods where he camped, the rocks where he sat to watch a hawk one afternoon.
He loved mountains and the out-doors. A skier, a ballplayer, an athlete.
Johnny listened, and remembered the pictures Deane showed him of the sea, and snow-capped mountains....
The hills were alive....
That spring, before they went out to a pub, Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre came upstairs and asked Johnny to dinner. He couldn't go. He was going drinking with Deane. But he said she could join them, if she wanted. He thought that was the least he could do.
They started down the stairs together when Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre suddenly grew friendly and started to ask questions. What did he know about Deane? What interested him? She pinned him against the wall for five minutes, interrogating him.
She was drunk.

Sea, ships, mountains.
Where were the nuns? Austrian war criminals singing Edelweiss....
So camp!
How could he take it seriously?
She ran down ahead of him, laughing. Deane came around the landing. She leered at him.

*****

When he closed his eyes and forgot time he experienced his mind's satisfaction at having not quite lost itself.

He heard the overture but as yet no voices. He leaned against the back door of a pub. Young studs stumbled into the parking lot. They wore promotional T-shirts with the motto of a local brewery emblazoned across their hard little nipples : I am Dadanian!
They urinated against the hubcap of a wrecked Cessna. The hubcaps were just an excuse for doing it together, with plenty of opportunities for furtive comparison. Johnny couldn't forebear making a few comparisons of his own, thinking of Deane and his bigger, meatier tool. Deane was from abroad....
Having fun?
Porko emerged from the shadows, his five o'clock shadow a dark smudge over his lewd mouth. His toupee on crooked.
Johnny didn't want to talk to him. But he was there.
Leaving?

_____

Home?

_____

And what will you do? Porko stood with his hands in his pockets. He was playing with himself.

Climb mountains? Go bowling? Haunt the urinals of the loco beer parlor?

Getting warm?

That would explain why Johnny had started to vomit the ploughman's lunch.

I spent 3 years on welfare doing nothing. I rode the rails into the prairies. I read Cervantes in the park on Sunday afternoon, a bottle of cheap wine beside me. Forget it, Johnny Boy.

*****

Slowly they walked along the street and out under the bridge at the end of town. A footpath cut through the trees to the school.

He would leave. He would narrow his horizons. He would retire now.

The power line sang above them. A few feet ahead of them an open sewer flowed into the river and a white mist rose through the trees.

The crumminess had fixed itself. His needs had become permanent.

*****

Sorry to do this to you, JOHNNY!

*****

Charlie swaggered down Thing Street, and fell.

The porter dragged his carcass into the lobby. The night clerk took the identification out of his wallet and kept the money.

He had been on Welfare, so there wasn't much.

He had Elvira's address. They called her. She hated the interruption. After her guests she thought of going over to the Hotel, but she was too stone.

Eventually she made her way up the steps where Sam McFee met Lord Willingdon. She put her hand on the railing, struck a moving picture attitude, and entered the lobby.

*****

Johnny was awakened by a taxi driver pounding on his door.

Mr. Midas. Telegram.

Johnny was hung over. He opened the door in his dressing gown, paid the man, and opened the envelope.

From Elvira.

It was EMPTY!

*****

It amazed him to think that the thing on the bed was his father.

The ALKY!

He stood by the headboard, hands held politely behind him. Then he brushed his eyelids, remembering that this had once been a family.

He took Dorothy by the arm to the foot of the bed. She stood a few moments, about to cry, but made a small noise instead and pressed the bolster with one gloved hand and turned away, without her son.

Jack loitered in the corridor.

Johnny passed a stack of Gideon Bibles by the door, crossed the hall, and entered the lobby where the coke machines were ocher-colored. He drank a bottle of pop with young men who'd wandered in from a convention.

*****

Pioneers of Alienation

A "Memorandum for the Honourable W.D. McPherson, Provincial Secretary," prepared by Dr. Clare in December, 1918 (Archives of Ontario, Provincial Secretary's Correspondence, RG 8-5, W.D. McPherson Files (1916-1919), "Memorandum [of December 6, 1918] for the Honourable W.D. McPherson, Provincial Secretary," Container 100, Toronto Hospital for the Insane, Reception Hospital Folder), explained that part of the role of the planned Reception Hospital was to keep the large population of "defectives and insane" that "drift in" to the capitol from ending up in gaol.

The idea of a migration of the insane to the city, so reminiscent of Clarke's scarifying, probably had less to do with reality than with Dr. Clare's desire to make caring for them a provincial as well as a municipal responsibility.

*****

Charles Waldorf Handy.... Speaking!

Good afternoon, Professor! Clarke Barr here. About that ad you placed this morning in the Star. For a room to rent, near the University.

Yes ... yes ... of course. The voice seemed to be coming from underwater, from his Unconscious Self. Then it surfaced with a splash, like Flipper: Yes, yes, yes. A renter, yes?

He imagined a florid, grasping man, his lower body truncated by an enormous hulking desk, its polished surface feebly reflecting the daylight glinting through one of the ten thousand insect eyes of the C. K. Sharke Institute. Caring Kind, or Cold Killer? Clarke Barr wondered; he had a powerful imagination.

The ad says Whimpy Street.

That's right. That's right. Yes, yes. Of course. North of College, west of Vagina Rd.

East of the sun, west of the moon.

Wanna see it? He asked eagerly, sniffing.

It has facilities? Kitchen, and bath?

Yes, and.... he paused before the most important thing, that should have come first.

Toilet paper!

They arranged to meet in an hour.

*****

Clarke Barr daintily finished his strudel, drained his coffee cup, and rose from the table. He paid the waitress, a scornful fat bitch with sadistically glittering tear-shaped glasses inlaid with what appeared to be bits of human bone. He carried his newspaper and the valise in one hand, his umbrella in the other. Free toilet paper. He could hardly wait. The door tinkled when he left.

*****

Soggy with rain and sweat, Johnny opened the door; it tinkled. He sat down on a vinyl-upholstered stool; it farted. He ordered a coffee from a fat waitress; she swore. Things were looking up....

He scanned the paper he had stuffed into his knapsack on Catharine Street. He had just found Housing, and was looking under Rooms, Furnished.

Suddenly the white nurse-shoe of the fat bitch shattered the leather-look sides of his suitcase. Move it!

He glared at her.

Deef, sunny? I said move it outta my fuckin' way!

He complied. He resumed his reading, the waitress muttering about his being new to Hogtown. Like they didn't have enuf homos, etc. Then he saw it:

MODEL SUITE
To Let
Near
University of Titz

*****

Professor Handy was with a client.

Mildred had been circumstantially recounting episodes from her troubled sex-life. Charles W. Handy had become aroused and, unable or unwilling to control himself, had opened his fly, releasing his erection.

Mildred had just finished telling him all about her private calisthenic lessons with an unusually gifted male gymnast, when he had sloppily ejaculated into the crotch of his brand new Brooks Brothers suit.

He had long since exhausted his supply of costly tissues, but immediately prior to this session he had providentially encountered the janitor making his grand rounds of the Sharke Institute water closets and had resourcefully stolen several dozen roles of the finest quality triple-ply ass-wipes.

*****

A western view, the Professor rhapsodized.

Johnny thought of Spengler: declining.

The room itself looked like the occupant had just stepped out for a shower, and never returned: shoes and dirty socks kicked under the bed, pants and a shirt tossed over the back of a chair before a small, antique table at a window in an alcove. Where had they stashed the corpse?

Dr.'s things are still here, Handy apologized.

That's swell. He noticed the two small windows on either side of the alcove; across the street, he saw rows of what probably were just more flops. Narrow structures, condemned, shoulder to shrivelled shoulder, or their equally cowardly firing squad. Johnny silently cursed the occupants. Shit on all your houses. Handy hadn't enough asswipes.

Yeah, a fine view. He saw against one wall a dirty-white chest of drawers that had been a buffet, against the other a sagging bed.

Thirty dollars a week, said Handy. It's adorable. Actually, the rent is thirty-two dollars a week, but I'm willing to let it go for thirty, for now. Johnny had to act now or lose his chance.

May I pay for three weeks? Johnny asked.

Might he! Handy yelped, convulsed with violent, irrepressible joy. Could he ever....

Handy collapsed on the side of the bed, flourishing his precious alligator billfold. He was already autographing the receipt with a stupendously phallic jewel-encrusted fountain-pen, incoherently nattering at his Day-Timer.

The kitchen was down the hall to the right (Handy continued) but he probably shouldn't wander back their after dark. He should padlock the fridge, and count the knives every evening at dusk. If any go missing, don't go to bed.

Oh, before I forget, he added, an expression of intense hatred distorting his wasted face....

There are some punks, students I mean....

Two women, one man. The woman in the front studies architecture; her speciality's Edwardian Classicism. The one in the middle studies Renaissance flute.

The man in the rear bedroom just moved in today. He's studying D.H. Lawrence; he fiddles. His name's Clarke. Clarke Barr....

Handy consulted a scrap of paper that he dragged out of a pocket of his floor-length Crombie coat. It resembled the frock coat of a Dadanian public man....

Gold-rimmed pince-nez, gleaming on his nose....

That's right, he resumed. You'll find him more congenial than your neighbors upstairs....

Once I get rid of the flutist, there's a tenant from one of my other resorts who wants to move in, because he's on the third floor and he can't stand the stairs. Could be dementia praecox, only he's too old. More likely General Paralysis of the Insane...

He's affable most days, except when he's delusional. Then he thinks he's a writer. He's an unemployed copy-clerk. Named Porko....

The missing Marx Brother. Ha, ha! Maybe you've seen him? Short? Fat? Waddles everywhere with a shopping-bag full of paper scraps. Thinks it's Work in Progress....

Johnny knew he'd seen him somewhere....

Handy reminded him, never to leave any sharp objects lying around, because his neighbors were paranoid subtype and if they ever armed themselves they would surely rape, maim, murder, and generally inflict considerable property damage.

And yes, Handy concluded, laughing insanely, although it was terribly expensive, the toilet paper was free.

Johnny hoped it was a name brand. Wings of the Dove or Golden Bowl. Something dirty like that.

*****

Johnny toured the water closet. The tub was filthy. Above the sink a sign said: Tenants are requested to clean tub after bath or shower. Sponge and cleanser under the sink. The walls were blue-tiled, making the narrow cell dark and aqueous. The water-tank was under the window, so one had to lean over it to look out, when one peed.

He noted the toilet-paper dispenser: empty! There wasn't any more...

Pioneers of Alienation

He visually toured the backyard, from the bathroom window, leaning over the water-tank. Nothing was wasted. Of course, there were no curtains. Standing by the window, he watched a tall blond man of his own build, but a few years older. His beard was blond, bordering on red.

That's the Master's Degree, thought Johnny.

Without the beard, he would have been more appealing. Clarke Barr, Professor Handy had said. His hair swept back theatrically, like a wig (it was so unnaturally stiff). Even his chest hair, the next thing he noticed about him, similarly swept back, from upright nipples as big as quarters. Gold-rimmed pince-nez made him look slightly ascetic.

Johnny thought something was not quite right about Clarke Barr. The forehead too low? The jaw too small? Neanderthal?

Perhaps it was what he was doing, sanding a worthless chest of drawers with a big wire brush, before varnishing it with the contents of the yellow can beside him. Blond hair on head and face, tufting breasts and armpits, wood and varnish and brushes, altogether too much yellow, too many bristles....

He looked exactly like Boris Karloff in The Brainwashing of John Hayes (A Transformation)....

His whiskers looked glued on. At any moment he would break into a defense of American Imperialism, like Lawrence Harvey. He was really just a hambone imitating Albert Schweitzer. That's where he stole the whiskers.

Johnny returned to what was now his room. He'd write a poem at the table in the alcove.

When he got back from his walk....

*****

Nowhere can you buy shoes like this at this price. Genuine DIX! I could sell them for fifteen, twenty easy. But I know you don't have much money.

Johnny held out two five dollar bills. The man took them, folded them, tucked them into his shirt pocket and, still holding the shoes, asked him if he would like a bag.

No, he was about to say, then for some reason changed his mind. Yes, I would.

The man seemed enormously gratified. He rummaged in a heap of dusty red and white plastic bags bearing the insignia of other establishments. Genuine STORES. He held one open and dropped the shoes inside. He handed the parcel to Johnny.

Thank you, he said.

Suddenly the proprietor seemed sad, having made his sale. Perhaps there would be nothing more to do all day.

I'll get a lot of use out of these.

Sure, said the man, brightening. They're DIX!

Johnny would feel proud, wearing DIX on his FEET.

Those shoes you're wearing now.... He was about to disparage them, but stopped as if they did not warrant even that sort of attention. These ones have more style, he said, indicating the bag.

Yes, he said, trying to sound successful. It'll be important, on the job. As soon as I get one...

Sure, said the man, you want a manufacturing job, first they're gonna look at your shoes....

Right.

Your DIX!

Good afternoon.

Good-bye!

*****

The Hydro came on in the windows of the narrow houses across the street.

Some lights were covered by proper shades, others by makeshift ones (fins of an old parasol, a hat, even a flag), and still others glared nakedly....

He tried to imagine the neighbors reading, or watching television, or writing a poem.

Where the drapes were drawn, they were jerking off....

*****

As I walked down Vagina Ave
(I always felt that I walked down
that street, not up, and felt the town
declined toward the south along
the compass lines) I saw a man

rabbinical and he emerged
from restaurant and stood outside
like mystery personified
and for a spell I lusted him
the wisdom that had made him dim
when wind exhaled and sunlight surged
and lust was for the men I saw
that Michelangelo would draw
on pages from his pocket book
in an enraptured hurry torn
and painted on a church's wall
at which the peddler ruined all
those realistic faces made
material for a promenade
of sanguine pope and cardinal
and rang the bell (no astral bell))
and cried Knives sharpened!

Unlike the knell
that told man-kind the world was dead
and bade their spirits run ahead
to bodies' honor or disgrace
he tolled, and left the world in place.

*****

Clarke Barr had a message for Johnny.

Come in, won't you?

Sure. He thought the fellow was a bit officious; after all, he lived there. But he let the student lead him down the hall, into his bedroom.

Come in, he said. This is where I live.

Oh. Johnny saw a room nearly identical to his own, but cleaner and filled with many more records and books. A set of shelves nailed into the wall was stacked with records on the bottom and with glossy students' paperbacks on the second and third tiers.

Sit down. Johnny sat in an ugly, square, brown-upholstered chair of the sort that usually came on special with a chesterfield and a framed reproduction of a bull fight. The student sat down on a stiff wooden chair before the desk in the alcove.

I should have introduced myself, he said. I'm Clarke, Clarke Barr.

How do you do. Johnny shook his hand. I'm Johnny. Johnny Midas.

Johnny sat with the back of the chair between his legs, his hands resting on the top, his chin on his hands.

Your sister called. She left a message.

Oh! What?

She said to say she came while you were out.

How odd.

She looks like you. Did you know?

Yes, stunning.

Only she was well-dressed. Is she a designer?

Yes, always. He glanced at his shopping bag. Wondering what he would think, after he saw his Dix.

I guessed she was your sister almost immediately. What are you doing here?

Actually, I was just on my way to change my shoes. I was a student. But I'm through with that for now.

Oh. U of T?

Not the U of Titz. You?

Still.

You've quite a few books. And records.

A few.

I recognize.... Thomas Mann and, whadya know, Gustav and Anton. Didn't I hear you playing The Titan?

I only listen to fin de siecle Austrians. They're so fascinating.

Yes, but on a SEABREEZE?

Clarke utterly ignored him as he discoursed on Webern, this fastidious little Viennese gentleman who tended the flowers in the window-boxes of his apartment, off the Ringstrasse probably, worshiped musical law and order, and was shot to death after curfew by an American soldier of the occupation.

Oh. I knew I'd heard of Rayban somewhere.

VAY-BURN! Don't you know what he said when he died? The student glared at him, through the magnifying lenses of gold-rimmed pince nez....

Fucking clueless, Johnny apologized, deeply embarrassed.

He said, It is finished.

But we were just getting started....

Christ's words on the cross, you fool.

It was Johnny's turn to stare. Whadya know.

I've always noticed, resumed the blond student, how interested Mann and all those things were in incest. Out of some kind of narcissism, I think.

Why, what makes you say that?

Oh, I don't know.

They stared at each other.

Something I've noticed.

Christ, thought Johnny. He wanted to go, but the student seemed to have more to say.

Have you read Thomas Mann's Sketch of My Life?

No, said Johnny.

He had two sisters, neither of whom did well. One committed suicide, another had a break-down, I don't recall precisely what over.

Germany?

She wanted to be an actress. But there must have been a deficiency of talent somewhere, because she never became one. Maybe brother Thomas ate it all up. She grew morbid and bought an elegant small box with a death's head on the cover; she got some poison from the druggist, and kept it inside. One day Frau Mann heard choking noises coming from her daughter's bedroom; when she finally broke in, her daughter was dead.

Close call, said Johnny.

I think it says a lot about the constraint of your average upper middle-class German family. The daughters all want to do things, but only one succeeds. Not one of them, I mean. The one who is male.

Clarke Barr chose an LP from the rack, carefully removed the record from its plastic slip-case, put it on the turntable, and reverentially lowered the needle onto the first groove. It sounded like an enormous live turd being slowly pinched to death between a pair of inexorable fat cheeks, constipated and lethargic.

What was that? Johnny demanded.

That, said Clarke Barr, reverentially, is Albert Schweitzer!

*****

They penetrated the bowels of the Hotel to the bank of lifts. I'm beginning to get the feel of things, Johnny announced.

Soon you'll do it in your sleep, Bill murmured. Now I have to find you a locker. Hurry, we're late.

This time they went beyond the elevators, down a grimy hall through a door labeled LOCKSMITH. The locksmith was a mustachioed Chinese man, drinking a coke at a frayed worktable, beneath myriads of keys hung in neat rows. What now? A new boy, eh?

He needs a locker, Bill said. With the porters.

Ah, the Salvation Army! Let's see what we've got for the Sally Anne. He disdainfully jingled a row of keys. Here's one near enough.

He handed No. 706 to Bill. Thanks, he said. Johnny hurried after him, back past the elevators, into a room near the stairs. As far as he could see, the walls were lockers.

Here. Bill handed Johnny the jacket. Change. There's your locker, and your key. I have to go. Come to the Convention Floor. Press C.

Johnny wore the flood-pants and the blazer. He hung his own worn brown pants on a crooked hanger that had been abandoned by the previous tenant. He locked 706 with the small key, and turned around to gaze at the room. The cement block walls were a bilious green, mercifully hidden by the lockers. The lockers themselves stood in large sets of green, blue, or brown, as if they had been accumulated in random lots, over the years. In the middle of the cement floor were islands of lockers with gray benches in front of them. The air stank.

He threaded his way back through the labyrinth, only this time without asking anyone for directions, and making only one wrong turn.

The elevators on the Convention Floor were the same as those on every other; outside every service elevator was the same dirty mat on the same concrete floor. Outside the guest elevators, things were different. On the balcony above the carpet broke like ocean surf against brass cliffs; below was the stagnant Sargasso, where ladies in long green dresses hovered in shoals, with the occasional tuxedoed kingfish.

Thing Street Asylum

A lady with heavily shadowed eyes, clutching a jet-beaded purse in red-nailed fingers, noticed Johnny dart past in his blue coat and shimmered towards him.

You look like you know your way around, she said.

Pardon? he asked, confused.

You don't know your way around after all, she said, and swam away.

To the west he saw, through the half-open double-doors, other blue-coats scurrying about with green-upholstered chairs and rough-edged wooden tables, in a vast room whose slender windows refracted the last of the dying sun from the Plexiglas towers across the street. Beams cut through the static air, onto the Indian rug, or crowned the heads of workers with dusty aureoles.

A stranger in a black tuxedo strode into Johnny's view. Johnny noticed the perfection of his shoes, smoother even than his flawless trousers; they must have cost more than ten dollars. Brand new DIX!

In his left hand, the stranger waved a clip-board full of frayed papers. With his right, he indicated rows of chairs that had been improperly arranged, and wrathfully shook one into position. Like a teacher scruffing a pupil....

Suddenly, the elegantly shod man spun on his Dix. He noticed Johnny, in his blue coat.

You there, he shouted. Are you with the Salvation Army, or do you work for me? You're late!

Is that the new man, Tony? Enquired a deep voice from the ceiling, among painted cherubim, and big-boobed Diana....

It was Mr. Ferreira.

Tony regarded the source, at an exaggerated angle which made Johnny think Mr. Ferreira was hovering somewhere among the chandeliers.

He's here, Jose. At last.

I hear you, Tony. But I don't see him.

Johnny approached Tony across the red carpet. He saw that Mr. Ferreira spoke from a small balcony that extended from his office, a part of the mezzanine.

What kept you? asked Tony.

Jose Ferraro welcomed him, smiling from the balcony where he leaned, his large hands pressed against the railing.

*****

You have work. I can't even say that I have a job any more, and she daubed viciously at a finger-nail, with a wisp of cotton batting.

The white eunuch-cat rubbed against her shin and she pushed it away with one explicit, slippered kick.

You also have your poetry, she continued, in a whining sing-song. You can suffer a menial little job, eight hours a day, piling chairs and setting tables, and write out your soul for another ten, and still have six left for eating and sleeping.

He hated her peevish state. She flung everything he said to her back at him as an insult.

It's never so predictable, he attempted to explain.

What is?

The Muse!

Crap! It's only a slight of jockishness that makes the Muse feminine. If you can't write, it's because of some bitch....

She stabbed the air with the index finger she'd been painting....

The sudden movement upset the little jar of pink polish, which spread viscously over the leather table-top.

Fuck!

The fat white eunuch regarded her from its wicker throne. Then it curled its nose into its tail, but indicated by the occasional twitching of its ear that it was still conscious, that it heard everything.

Johnny laid a piece of cotton fluff on his palm, then blew it onto the cat's nose. The animal sneezed and raised its leonine head to glare at him, then rose with tremendous dignity, and left the room.

I wish you'd leave that cat alone, snapped Elvira.

It's too self-contained.

I like it like that. She was mopping up with pieces of Kleenex. I wish I were, she said, wistfully. It's something we've never been good at.

Who? Women?

No. Us! Hateful as it must sound to you, you're still the little brother who smashed his fist through the window when he couldn't get in, and had to be told he was bleeding.

I remember that.

She stared into the book-case now, as though what she said could be read from those volumes.

Then who are you?

I'm the bitch who punishes you by refusing to talk to you for days and days.

Well, if that's the worst you can do....

Pioneers of Alienation

*****

He crossed Vagina Rd. and entered a blind alley behind the Sharke Institute. Despite its neo-fascist ultra-modernity, its clean angularity and thousand-windowed walls, it was Dickensian. A barracks. Like its occupants were too cheap to buy their own ass-wipes. Crummy!

He proceeded past the fly-flecked windows to a set of uninviting steel doors. He entered, scrutinized by a sullen Nazi.

Where to? he demanded, arms akimbo.

Professor Handy.

What for? Only dames came there. For the Great Unknown!

I have to see him. On business.

What business? Your marks? he demanded, suspiciously. If you aren't satisfied with your marks, speak to your registrar, Ulysses Dogleish.

No, I'm his tenant, said Johnny. Charles Waldorf Handy is my landlord.

Poor bastard, muttered the guard. Ninth floor!

Johnny entered a phone-booth paneled in arborite, with battered tin fenders. Don't kick against the pricks, he reminded himself. He pressed number 9 on the glowing keypad. A fan shrieked above, machinery chattered, and the phone-booth rose like a magical flying coffin.

At last the lift groaned open and he entered a dark tunnel where an eerily illuminated bulletin board identified the Professors of Psychiatry, with white plastic fridge magnets. He found Handy, the fourth name form the top, his office number beside it.

Handy's office was actually very close, but he took the wrong way around, clockwise from the elevators. When he finally arrived and knocked, there was no answer. He knocked again, and heard the slither of things extricating themselves from a supine embrace. There was a final rustle, followed by the scrape of a chair. Then a faint, exhausted, hyper-correct voice inquired, with just a trace of counterfeit English accent, Who's there, please?

Professor, it's Johnny. Johnny Midas.

Oh, he said, after a stunned pause. His refinement dissipated. Wait a minute. There was more movement, now accompanied by rapid whispering, more scraping, and finally the fall of the tumblers in the lock. Then the pastel panel of the door appeared to subside and metamorphose into the spectral omnivorous face of the great Handy, in an unusually unbuttoned, crumpled-looking Arrow shirt.

Johnny thought he recognized bulking female form, lurking in the shadows behind him.

Don't tell me there's no toilet-paper, he hissed.

Where I work is controlled by Dadanian Pacifier, and Dadanian Pacifier withholds your pay for a month. He didn't tell him, he'd quit his job.

So?

I need an extension on my rent.

Looks like I have to. He glanced anxiously behind him. Besides, he'd heard Clarke Barr was leaving next week for the Congo. No time to kick Johnny out.

All right, then.

Johnny was afraid to ask what Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre was doing there. So he said thanks, professor.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm with a client.

*****

The girl in the middle finally vacated her cell in Handy House.

On the afternoon of the big day, Mrs. Professor Handy showed up and demanded whether that bitch had got rid of her shit yet.

She threw him Porko's keys, and tipped him with an extra role of ass-wipes from the hoard Handy kept locked under the upstairs bathroom sink.

Such extravagance.....

Johnny discovered how it felt, suddenly to inherit a legacy....

He sat with Porko, in the downstairs kitchen. It had not taken him long to move in from the flop down the street: a few bags of clothes, and his Collected Shit in another shopping bag; that was all. Water dripped from the leaky tap onto the dirty dishes in the corroded enamel sink. Porko held his mug of tea with both hands and sipped carefully. So as not to disturb his wig. Johnny let his cool. Porko was talking.

There was a telegram on the arborite table. It stated that during an especially bad famine, Clarke Barr had been eaten by the very things he had gone to improve.

He had been an even greater flavor than Albert Schweitzer, in commemoration of which a confection would be locally introduced, already familiar to Europeans and Americans alike, confusion over the identity of which was thought to have precipitated the disaster.

Proceeds would go directly to....

They ignored it.

My favorite was the Swede, Porko continued, after a loud fart. He got drunk, lost his key, broke the front door, and smashed every god-damned fucking window in the French doors of the master bedroom. Handy arrived for the rent, treading in shiny new Dix on broken glass from one end of the corridor to the other, shaking his head and whining that he was s-o-o-o disappointed....

The Swede emerged from the crapper and shoved the shit-smeared sheers that he he'd just been wiping his fat butt with straight in Handy's nose and shouted.

No toilet ass-wipes, no money, English!

Handy recoiled screaming incurable, oh, god, an incurable! and ran to call his goons at the Sharke Institute.

It was a long way, to the Sharke....

With all the excitement, Max the Butcher had to crap. Handy had to crack open the safe under the sink and break out a fresh role of finest triple-ply.

Max was just getting comfy on the throne when he got a good look at the asswipes in his fist and, sure enough, there it was....

The sleek head, broad shoulders, and big satchel mouth with rows of pearly teeth....

The logo of the C.K. Sharke Institute...,

For Institutional Use Only....

Max was nothing, if not institutionalized....

This was outrageous....

Here Max the Butcher had come to save Charlie Handy and Charlie Handy had nearly made him a felon all over again. And he was still on parole for blowing up that Angels clubhouse! Imagine his indignation!

Max went insane. And he still had to go really bad. He waddled out of there as fast as he could with his pants around his ankles, found Handy in the corridor where he was still estimating property damage, inflating the bill with a few incidental repairs that he'd been postponing for years, like restoring the foundations, etc., and scruffed him by his Arrow collar.

Fuckah, he began. Too cheap to buy your own ass-wipes. I get framed for it, I get thirty years. I oughta strangle you to death.

Uh, uh, said Handy.

Instead we're gonna take a little journey, togedder, to duh presink. But ferst tings ferst. Then he literally tore the Brooks Brothers off Handy's supine, heaving back. Tanks fer duh loan. Preciate it. Don't move.

He violently rubbed Handy's Brooks Brothers up and down his crack a few times, then shoved the reeking rags in Handy's quivering, upturned face. Tanks again. Now get dressed. C'mon.

Handy was busted. They booked him for petty theft. He was the first Vice-President of the American Psychoanalytic Congress ever to be impeached.

Max the Butcher got an honorary doctorate and lectures in the Department of Criminology and Social Work.

Ha ha ha. It was just like the Hemingway story. Only the Swede won.

*****

He relaxed in the sun.

Melancholy, the waterfront had an after-the-holiday air.

A few sails moved.

Waves lapped against the dock, a flag snapped like a towel, birds cried.

A Cessna!

*****

Still mute hotel rooms long after business has
gone home with night's ebb glimmer electrically.
Now no one stirs here. Only desk clerks
rustle the page of a book we've all read.

Dawn peals in St. James. Clarion voices of
god sound across town. Sunlight effaces the
lights still aglow here. Makes them nothing.
Quickly the morning effaces all things.

*****

Pioneers of Alienation

He turned to study the three black towers of the Dadanian Centre, and behind them the taller spire of the Bank of Montreal, looming like a pale elder brother.

And crouching in the foreground, he saw The Hotel, its name blazing across the lake like a theatre marquis:

Bright Boy Wanted!

Show your pluck and try your luck!

Hell, he thought. And walked away.

*****

Johnny's first day at the office, in the maze behind the massive bronze doors in the lobby, he met Butch.

He didn't recognize him.

He saw just another stocky youth in aviator glasses who wore his shit-blond hair 70's style.

Butch peered over the partition, at Johnny and Bruce.

You're walking, aren't you? Bruce asked Johnny, faggy-disgusted. He'd changed, and it was Friday.

Of course. He switched his calculator off and on again, to clear it, then ran the tape ahead like a man in a stall yanking off a clean swathe of triple-ply ass-wipes.

Are you going to leave it on? Bruce demanded.

Oh, no, he said, finally switching off the power. Ready.

At last. Bruce turned to Butch. We're going out, he informed him. Come along. If you're interested.

I am. I haven't done that in a while.

Because you're from Windsor. Which wasn't exactly true, but a trope.

They came from the same place. Nowhere.

*****

For our diversion we considered where
but left the matter with the more adroit
who traveled with us under the St. Clair
exactly where the Tunnel was Detroit.
Every distinction was on holiday;
we led our teacher in the exercise
a carnival occasion for display:
green space, high-risers, and then shut your eyes!
Strange how as metaphor the thing returns
years after more, more sexual exploits
the teacher teaches still, the student learns.
Irrelevant: the Windsors, the Detroits.
    Rocketing through the tunnel we'll decide
    among sky-scrapers, where the grass has died.

*****

Johnny couldn't finish his audit report. On Mondays and Thursdays receipts arrived from one hundred and eighty branches in numbered red-and-white envelopes in greasy-black body-bags; whoever's turn it was to do the mail that week, retrieved them from the cellar. The envelopes had to be sorted and distributed by region and not all the envelopes were properly identified by the branches.

Johnny and Bruce worked in The East; that is, they audited the branches from Quebec and the The Eastern Satrapies. The East was the hardest region to audit....

They had ways in The East, of shattering the strongest courage....

It was The East's turn on mail this week; they were behind. Bruce had still managed to finish by four, which was late for him, since he usually finished by three or even two and gossiped with Trixie for the rest of the afternoon.

They were just friends....

*****

Thing Street Asylum

I have to buy a present for my niece, Bruce announced.

From the flickering green screen of his terminal he had been studying Johnny, studying his adjustments on a large blue pad pages of which had to be submitted early Friday morning to the Jamaican key-punch operator upstairs. Johnny had never even met the man.

Have to, Johnny repeated, thinking he had to get his adjustments in.

That place we passed on Thing Street....

Thursday night?

Should be open, if we leave at four, Bruce said. It annoyed him that Johnny sometimes stayed longer, only because he (Bruce) worked faster; it made him look less conscientious.

Or do they stay open till ten to-night? Johnny wondered, absently. Friday....

Are you walking? He knew he was.

Yes, I could use a walk, I suppose....

Do you want to walk, then? he asked, meaning let's.

At four. And Johnny frowned because only half his branches were balanced. Ah, The East!

*****

They passed a dozen giant metal cockroaches scaling the brick and corrugated iron facade of the Cameron House on Thing Street. Bruce shook his head.

Let's cross!

What for?

Come on! Johnny urged, walking back.

I'm not going in.

Just one beer; I'll buy.

Well; but if there are just a lot of old....

There will be young ones, too, Johnny assured him, holding the door. Between Xeroxed posters of loco talent he saw through the slats of a metal screen. Drinkers sprawled on benches at tables arranged along the three walls of a rectangular room at one end of which was a bar, at the other a green plywood partition concealing the door to the MENS room and another door to a big back room.

See, all ages, Johnny said, as he sat down at one of the few tables away from the wall.

Most things sat together gazing into the center of the room, at nothing.

Heavy-jowled men in their late fifties seemed puzzled by the young patrons, the women with wildly colored, spiked hair and the men as bald as themselves. The young patrons tolerated the old, as proof of the authenticity of the place.

Bruce felt uncomfortable in the center of the room.

Why here? he demanded, with no intention of moving unless he had to. He eyed the green plywood partition. They were close to the MENS room; they smelled piss, authentic.

THIS IS PARADISE proclaimed dark green letters stenciled on the wall. A heavy-jowled man in black 50s glasses sat behind them, beside a jukebox with flashing, psychedelic lights. Except for the occasional R & B or C & W ballad, the music was mainly 50s jazz. Johnny had already deposited his quarter when he felt something tug at his sleeve. An unshaven man in a brown corduroy suit.

Something.... he paused, waving his right hand drunkenly, three fingers extended. He was middle-aged, gaunt, with an air of seedy elegance. A lady-killer pencil mustache....

Light, Latin.... he said. Guitars, la la la, he demonstrated, strumming. He dug into the pockets of his corduroy jacket and scooped out handfuls of quarters, offering them to Johnny. You choose, he said, waltzing away.

Out of the corner of his eye Johnny could see Bruce, alone at their table, nodding his head. So he chose: Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, Eddie Cleanhead Vinson, not exactly Latin:

> A fine romance with no kisses
> A fine romance, my friend, this is
> We should be like a couple of hot tomatoes
> But you're as cold as....

Light, Latin, the man said, taking Johnny's hand after he sat down. He made a sign with his fingers, signifying perfection. Bruce covered his face with his hands, but the man danced away, immensely gratified.

He was John Waters.

*****

You know, Johnny began, this is the last juke-box in Hogtown that has Billie Holiday on it. Someone has taste!

I love it when you do that, Bruce said, starting his third beer.

What?

Say somebody has taste because he likes what you like.

*****

They got drunk, studying the paintings on the cinder-block wall. Loco talent. They were all of groups of things. Johnny noticed how uncentered they were, everyone affected by some violent, centrifugal force, like a giant whirlpool, a fan, or a turbine, hurling them out of the center of the room, on invisible blades....

Someone found Lost Highway on the juke-box. What was Hank Williams doing there?

Bruce discarded his tie and mussed his hair, nodding his head to Lost Highway. He was from Nowhere!

Johnny thought about centrifuge. Suburbs were centrifugal, eccentric. Small towns, worse. The things you read about in The Sunshine never happened downtown, but in those disturbing hinterlands of bungalos, shopping-malls, and lost highways. Centrifuge.

Between suburbs he'd once caught a ride with a dapper little man driving a compact. He'd a lady-killer pencil moustache. He wore a brown corduroy suit.

He was Tennessee Williams.

His car was full of dirty laundry, and maps. He placed his hand on Johnny's thigh . . . .

you won't nestle
A fine romance you won't wrestle....

He kept his eyes on the traffic, but his mind was on Johnny's cock. Johnny always had books with him, so he extended a copy of Heine, Untermeyer translation, trying to make conversation. The man said he liked Heine. Johnny said he was happy to meet someone with taste, who liked what he liked, and the hand shot all the way to his crotch. The car swerved a little, as if Johnny had deflected it too with the book, which incidentally contained such great lines as Within your heart's black night there falls no beam.

The driver released him in the suburbs, too rattled to do anything else.

Wild! Bruce said, admiring art.

*****

Johnny heard birdsong on the Badhearse street-car. They were nearly almost at Kunt and the blond woman with the square baggage had already walked from the rear to the exit accompanied by a crescendo of birdsong, before he finally summoned the courage to ask her, whose birds they were. She said, they'd been removed from the cowling of planes, at the airport....

From Cessnas....

Nightingales....

He thought of Philomela's jugging, and pompously related everything he'd read about Victorians piercing the eyes of nightingales, to make them think it was night, and sing all day....

He immediately regretted it and, after she told him that thinking about it would depress her all day, he apologized.

His head was full of shit.

The most romantic thing he ever saw on the Badhearse car. She said good day as she got off at Fort Dork. She was being ironic....

*****

At a break in traffic he hurried ahead of a gaggle of women in long pink and white dresses. He hated holding the heavy bronze doors open for things who were stronger than him.

He passed under the concrete wings of the Assyrian angels in the frieze over the entrance and nodded at the night-watchman in his bronze-railed wicket, plundered like an Elgin marble from an old baseball coliseum. A lonely girl, different every day, waited for someone among the potted plants, on an overstuffed chair. The lobby was like a train station.

He still had to open the brass-sheathed door at the end of the labyrinth that led to his department, taking care not to run into any half-awake things, stumbling along the beige-carpeted corridor, splashing coffee from paper cups.

He thought he recognized Vladimir Horowitz, going the other way....

Past the cafeteria he took a deep breath and entered....

*****

Regional Accounting....

He threw his shoulder-bag into a box of miscellaneous envelopes, which he should have filed weeks ago. Noticing them made him stammer his usually loud good morning. Brad answered quietly. Colette said good morning without even looking up from her new terminal.

No one else was in. Butch came at half-past eight or nine, depending on traffic. Once Butch called in sick after the police stopped him for drunk driving, before breakfast. He was just excited....

Another morning he came late because he'd been kept awake all night by the rain beating a tatoo under his window, on the plastic awning of the nuts store....

Johnny wondered what was wrong now. He knew Trixie wouldn't be in yet.

He removed his coffee cup from the bottom drawer where he put it every night beside a growing wad of unfiled bank deposits and charge-card flimsies. He'd carried it all the way to the washroom and was just about to rinse it when he remembered. His key was in!

Dolores had convened a meeting just to tell them not to insert their time-keys and immediately pinch one.

Tony grumbled. They even wanted to control his SHITS!

Dolores threatened to pull his key. He wouldn't get PAID.

*****

Butch finally came. In a bright, pink silk shirt-and-tie. Johnny noticed that his tie was always thickly knotted before the taper; Butch was short. His own tie had to be knotted in the part that normally passed through the label.

Butch pretended to scorn shirts and ties altogether. Once before lunch at the tavern on Badhearse and Thing he drove Johnny around in his Mustang, looking for a place to park. Businessmen in stifling, dark suits thronged the sidewalks with their smiling Trixies. Butch tugged at his tie and complained of the heat, the cuffs of his freshly-ironed Arrow © shirt rolled up over forearms sparsely covered with shit-blond hairs.

In his leather jacket, in the passenger's seat, his knees continually jostled by Butch's manly gear shifts, Johnny agreed. It would be nice, if they didn't have to wear ties. Nicer, if they could go....

Naked!

Butch was from Maypole City, via the underground railroad, Uncle Tom's Cabin....

He'd lived in New Berlin, a formerly rural, conservative bedroom community. Cross burnings, serial killings. They'd brought beer to school in their lunch-boxes, and swilled it at recess, over the hill.

The alkies....

He never became a doctor....

He was over the hill....

Last Sunday, he got laid on the picnic table while Joy rubbed coconut oil into his nipples. He smiled to himself as he opened the bright, pink shirt to show Johnny the angry red paps with hairy aureoles....

He was gaining weight. He needed a corset....

*****

How's it hanging, he wondered. Butch!

He'd already rolled up his sleeves to his elbows; he would wear them like that till he put on his studded leather jacket, and drove home.

If it was hot in the Mustang, he'd strip.

Johnny hadn't said much to Butch lately. Johnny was old, so he let youth take the initiative.

It didn't have any, so he asked. How was the game?

We lost! Butch slapped his desk, compressing his lips into a moue like a cat's ass-hole, under a lady-killer pencil moustache.

Johnny said, sorry.

But we had a BALL!

Johnny asked if they went drinking after. Baseball only lasted an hour.

Yeah.... We got STONED!

When he couldn't find them in the park, he jogged from Cowland along Spore, south down Minor to Collage, east along Collage to Vagina, south down Vagina to Thing, west along Thing to Badhearse, and south to Lake Hogtarry.

They were on the Island.

Meanwhile Bruce had returned from the photo-copier, carrying papers for distribution among the various desks. He ostentatiously handed Butch a sheaf.

Have a BALL....

He rolled up his sleeves, right to the pits.

*****

Bru-uce. Johnny called in a clear, official voice, since he and Bruce weren't speaking just now.

Bruce ignored him, hoping his voice would quiver and break under the strain of repetition. He read handbooks for want-to-be executives. How to sound used to giving orders. The bitches in personnel sounded like they'd spent 20 years working the switchboard in a Thing Street welfare hotel.

Bru-uce. Johnny repeated.

Ye-es. Bruce finally answered, the way that made Johnny hate him.

Want to go for mail?

Now-ow?

*****

Instead Peter walked slowly ahead of him down the corridor, away from the cafeteria. He kept his jacket on. Johnny supposed the dust from the bags would show up against the purple plaid.

Peter held the door to the stairwell, and they clattered down two flights of concrete stairs to the basement, around the corner and past the fake columns of Communications, intended to suggest the continuity with Greek culture of banks, asylums, and casinos.

The only clerk still sorting was an elderly white-haired German woman.

There you go, dears. She indicated three dusty bags leaning against the wall.

He handed the rope of one to Peter, and took the others himself. He was used to it. He brushed the dust of Trois-Rivieres off his light-grey trousers. At least he wasn't wearing purple plaid.

He had the prospect of Dadania Day before him; he would work all day at his desk and, when it got dark, listen to the fireworks.

*****

I heard you doing your Quasimodo.

Getting the mail.

Ye-es.

It's a routine, isn't it?

You put your SOUL into it.

In his beefy red mit Brad grabbed half-a-dozen red and white envelopes off the floor, his candy-striped shirt-sleeves rolled up to his elbows, his hairy forearms covered with scratches that he said had been made by his wife's cat.

Johnny figured it was his wife. Putting herself into it.

Which is which. Brad hovered over the bins, like Liberty deliberating whither to cast her light that went out.

Like the map. Johnny indicated three plastic bins, from left to right. That summed up Dadania. Cowgary, Hogtown, Montage.

Then these go here. And they can come and get it themselves. He meant Tony and Bruce. The west and the east, respectively.

*****

Across the blue partition Johnny spotted Bruce.

His dark hair needed trimming; it rose in curls against the rectangular free frames.

His red suspenders were bright against his pin-striped shirt.

He had gone with him to buy the suspenders at Simpson's, where Bruce had an account. Of which he was inordinately proud....

They were at the foot of the escalator when a young woman accosted them with a clipboard full of applications. At Bruce's urging, Johnny applied.

He had been employed at the same place for three months, a record. He didn't explain that officially it was the agency that employed him. He had worked for a small advertising company, as an account executive; he had lived at the same address for five years, since his student days.

Bruce was shocked when Johnny even gave her his telephone number. She wrote it down. He'd hear from her in two weeks.

Johnny qualified.

They had continued through Menswear, to a display of suspenders, where Bruce was disappointed to discover that they had no red ones; what he really needed was an Eatone's card.

Eatone's always had red suspenders.

They had contacts too, in their Optical Department. Bright blue ones (his eyes were brown).

He must have got his Eatone's card....

Bruce handed him his copies, then went to Tony's desk.

*****

Tony began to stencil charges at the machine. Each time he drew the embosser back and forth, his large blond head bobbed above the partition. A gauge of commerce, but it looked like he was having sex.

The back-bone of the economy....

Every branch he audited had a plastic card which he inserted under the slip. The machine clicked as it embossed the head office I.D. going one way, and the branch I.D. the other. Two copies accompanied the actual hard cards; the third went with the flimsies.

It was filed away....

*****

Eatones, a card worth having!

*****

Johnny wanted to go back to that moment when the credit card woman approached them at the foot of the escalator in Men's Wear, and settle his account with Robert Simpson.

*****

Bruce asked Tony if he wanted to hear Jethro Tull.

At least Bruce didn't have to stretch over the partition.

Unlike Butch who, when he peered over the partition with his small round face, reminded Johnny of a stir-stick on the rim of a cocktail glass.

He's shit, Tony said.

*****

Midmorning Johnny noticed the youth with the deep tan that shallow rich kids got on break.

Gossiping with Trixie, over the partition.

Colette noticed too, and shouted from her desk.

Deane!

She was Wanda Landowska, cake-walking on the clavier.

Deane wanted to do lunch.

Johnny heard him, gushing about that summer when he'd worked for Regional Accounting. All about things. They were unforgettable.

Colette said he was unlike some things. The President's son, but he treated them nicely.

Johnny said he should, since they made his father's fortune.

She got up and tip-toed over to his desk and, glancing significantly at the empty chair where Brad usually sat, whispered in his ear that she knew what he meant, but some things with a lot less money really treated her worse. If he knew what she meant....

Johnny had no time to answer before Brad came over, wondering if they had any work to do.

*****

It's fine for one person. Butch said, as they squeezed into the green Mustang, noisily farting.

Johnny explained to Brad of The East. He called him Mustang Butch. In honor of the small shit-blond horses of Mexico and California and an R & B song about someone named Sally.
Brad wanted to know what year it was.
Johnny told him it was '72, not vintage '68. Mustang denoted a variety of small red Texas grape.
Brad was disappointed....

They debated who should sit on the hump. Butch leered at the shift protruding between the front seats like his second, bigger cock.
Bruce giggled.
Trixie sat on it, squealing.
Finally. Deane wallowed into the back seat, between Bruce and Johnny.

*****

When they turned east at Thing Street, Trixie directed Butch to a low rectangular building, like a 1950s post-office.
The high rectangular sign said Motor Motel.
Bruce had told them. After the captain of the baseball team, she'd slept around.
The class slut!
Butch suddenly realized he was lost in the parking lot of Trixie's cheap motel. Deane assumed she'd given them bad directions.
Butch patted his upholstered steering wheel uncomfortably, searching for a spot and glancing furtively at Bruce behind him. Bruce just shook his curls, negatively.
Look, a spot! Beating the steering wheel, dismayed as Lady Macbeth, at the spot's disappearance, as a powder-blue Lincoln pulled up ahead.
Everyone knew, Butch had a temper, especially around Joy. At a David Wilcox concert, he'd made her stand behind the open trunk of his Mustang, using it like a screen while he changed into designer jeans in the front seat. They all thought he'd protested too much then, at her giggling.
There, another spot!
Trixie warned them, someone else was interested too, but Butch'd already noticed.
I'll get out and stand on it, Deane offered, but Bruce and Johnny's bodies prevented him, and Butch got it anyway.
Trixie said Management wouldn't mind, for an hour or two. She knew all about it...
She squealed, as Bruce extricated himself from the backseat, slamming the door, leaving her moaning over her bruised leg.
Butch compressed his lips under his inchoate pencil-thin mustache, while Johnny slid along the seat, over Butch's dazzling white runners and boy-sized baseball glove. He squeezed out, between the door and the back of the front seat.
See you. Bruce spoke for all.

*****

Johnny found records at the Sally Anne. Hundreds in wooden boxes and plastic imperial-size milk cartons in the boutique in the rear of the basement, the rest of which was one big as-is section. The Dantean inner trash circle....
Endless.... GARBAGE NIGHT!

Bedlam! Not just London's, but every Bedlam ever created, by accident or design, where the wrecks went.
He returned to the tavern, at a quarter past one.

*****

Johnny! Butch shouted. But Johnny'd already spotted them. Bruce's jacket was louder than his yell. Bruce himself was quiet.
Johnny flung himself into the empty chair beside Butch.

The waiter waddled over, but Johnny wasn't drinking. The others still had a little brown lager in their glasses, but Deane's was black with rum and coke. They were discussing Bruce's wonderful new basement apartment, in his brother's house, which Bruce was decorating.

*****

The white-haired waiter returned, his belly swelling his T-shirt like an over-ripe melon.

Nobody ordered anything, when they noticed. Johnny wasn't drinking.

Butch said he'd just bought a condo, with money from his father's Tractor Works....

Bruce parried, his next move was into a HOUSE! Meanwhile, he was renting the basement in his brother's new duplex. His cell-phone business was really taking off. He was a PIONEER....

He was nervous, because his brother had thrown him out once already for blasting Jethro Tull albums too loud at night, but he'd found an Art student to share with from Up North, the kind that answered advertisements on match books, and liked Christmas....

Bruce always seemed to be buying a car. His father loaned him the down-payment on a Datsun from his dealership, a perfect old lady car (Tony said) that a school-teacher had traded-in, on a hearse. So he could reduce the travel-time from the suburbs to the downtown centre, where he worked....

He'd park it at the first subway stop, saving it for visits to the Precambrian Shield, where his retired parents lived in a bungalow, on a stump-lot in the middle of Nowhere, recording homoerotic episodes of Leave It to Beaver for him on their VCR.

He said when Colette called his apartment a room, it made him MAD. After all, he had a separate entrance, a private bathroom. It was a BIG apartment, and with his room-mate he could even afford it.

Bruce joked. With his first regular check from the bank, Johnny could buy a CAR. Like him and BUTCH!

Bruce was proud of his THINGS, but cars bonded him with Butch, even more than buggery.

Trixie joined them just in time to hear Deane claim that all Butch's Mustang needed, not that it wasn't entirely marvelous already of course, was to be a convertible.

Bruce thought everything was better, convertible.

Deane said Cadillacs always looked like transportation for old things, and pimps.

Bruce specified, black old things.

Johnny was thinking. His nieces would clamor, hearing his voice through the linoleum. They'd hear everything, over the Jethro Tull album. He'd have to spend weekends at Butch's condo, over the nuts store....

*****

Johnny leaned back in the chair as far as the spring would allow; he tapped his foot. As she returned from the time-clock Colette murmured goodnight so as not to be overheard by anyone else, a tiny, jet-beaded Victorian handbag in one hand and the keys to her Datsun in the other.

Trixie followed, smoking. Bruce was already at the door, but it was Trixie who said goodnight, only Trixie.

He hadn't meant to stay so late. When he glanced up at the clock he saw he had half an hour to go, before the mechanism stopped. He got the impression that Brad was waiting. After Brad moved to Colette's desk, surrounded by the books that comprised his Aging Report, the idea became a conviction. He kidded him at having so many Bibles, Brad with his good books. Brad gave him a very technical explanation, how the new computerized system was deleting deposits.

Doesn't that leave the onus on the customer to prove that the deposit was really made?

You got it.

Sal came by, a tall auditor with close-cropped hair, and a pencil mustache....

His pants always seemed to be belted across his chest. Over the blue partition, Sal wondered if he'd find a ticket on his windshield tonight.

Don't you have your own parking spot yet? Brad demanded. All one heard about these days. Parking!

Don't you even have a car? Brad asked Johnny, after Sal left, with his briefcase.

No. I don't want one. I think cars should be banned.

Bruce thinks he saves money with his car; I don't see how. That's Bruce for you.

I don't see either.

How can he? With parking? Gas?

Kids have to have a car these days.

Kids! You're a riot. You're not that old.

I feel the difference. They're Reaganites.

Reaganites! He guffawed. All for Rambo, and that shit. Halloween II, III, and IV. Yeah, Bruce is a Reaganite. If I caught my kid watching that violent crap, I'd knock his teeth out.

If you had a kid, Johnny thought. He said he considered Bruce and his friends quite conservative.

That's not the word I'd use.

Look at Butch. He's twenty, and already he's buying a condo. Already they want a car, a house, a wife, and of course, children.

You think Bruce wants a wife and kids? He laughed. You think Bruce wants to plant his seed in somebody? God forbid!

Meanwhile he had balanced all the branches in his package; indeed, he had been working the whole time. Before leaving, he asked Brad if it was all right.

Ed's upstairs. He would never leave without me. They'd been with the bank for years.

*****

On a concrete island in the middle of the street, at the foot of another street, a few workers waited shivering for the car, behind them their monumental warehouse. The top floors were gutted, the ancient obsolete machinery replaced by word processors. Only the original rooftop sign remained, visible early in the winter evening from as far away as Thing Street. They caught the red glow of it but they were too close, the angle too steep for them to decipher:

Jascha's Haberdashery.

The slaves boarded the first car headed downtown. It came and went without the commotion of the old Rockets, with a clear, electronic music.

Clean-cut young clerks in open-necked polo shirts flung cases of beer onto the steel rollers in the Brewer's Retail across the street, making a constant sibilance.

From the island they had to cross the westbound lane without the benefit of a street-light, unless they caught the Badhearse car, for the subway and the world. The Dadania Planning Authority assumed nobody lived where he worked, at least not around there. If he did, he better move. They didn't like pedestrians. Anyone crossing farther than the island, deserved to get hit.

Butch and Bruce stole across, in the wake of the street-car, as it hummed musically north, but Johnny missed the break in traffic; he had to follow alongside them, on the island, which was very long, a horizontal concrete cock.

They booed him from the other side, after he nearly caused an accident; they would have applauded when he finally got across, but their hands were too cold. Bruce stuck his in the pockets of his long black leather coat, and swaggered; Butch blew on his, and walked briskly, his short jacket zipped up, his sweater sticking out over his ass, making him look fat.

Johnny rummaged in his knapsack, put on a pair of gloves he found there, and handed an extra pair to Bruce.

Give them to Butch; I have pockets, he explained.

Do you?

Yes, I want them, Butch said. They fitted him badly, exposing plenty of wrist.

They passed Foodtown's gigantic warehouse, abandoned now that business had moved, along with everything else, to the suburbs. Great FOR SALE signs occupied windows between concrete pilasters.

Through the occasional transparent pane their gaze penetrated the building, skimmed dismantled shelves, vanished aisles where varying densities of light suggested the old merchandise, spectral accumulations, astral wares for Madame Blavatsky's shopping spree.

Train stations, bus depots, warehouses.

Prisons, hospitals, hotels, asylums, casinos....

Massively real and totally fake, existing for elsewhere. Or Nowhere. The monumental style tried too hard. Hogtown was all the same. Phony, guilt-ridden, not at all there.

Hogtown! Butch apostrophized the skyline over the much-disputed Railway Lands, cynosure of speculators, perforated with the thousand pin-pricks of the Plexiglas Towers, like the ceiling of Cranbrook Planetarium. In the summer Johnny ran down Badhearse from Spore to the Viaduct, the view a good excuse for a rest. He would pause, one reeking foot on the sidewalk and the other on the first rung of the iron railing, like a patron in a gallery.

I say that's one fine fucking building! Butch pointed to the CN Tower.

You'd love the view from my apartment, gushed Bruce. He forgot, he lived in a basement.

Johnny said, from mine, you see Thing Street!

They passed a long, low warehouse at the corner of Kunt and Badhearse, metal bolts protruding from bricks over the windows, plates retaining the old walls, that looked as though they would burst, releasing oceans of toxic mortar.

Below the tavern they passed a shop which dealt in light, fashionable furniture, canvas-backed directors' chairs, chrome-plated lamps, all incongruous. They paused to gaze at the contents, thinking of their shabby apartments.

They turned west at Thing. A block past the pizza joint, where a few customers sat chewing square pizzas behind the steamy window, they came to a long, tubular store the stock of which seemed to have been squeezed out onto the sidewalk. Like paste. Debris hung against the door and obliterated the window, but a tiny sign like the label on a decanter said Open, so Johnny pressed the latch and entered. Bruce and Butch followed.

Thing Street Asylum

A bell tinkled within the curtained sanctuary at the end of the long tunnel, occluded with offal. Johnny barely distinguished an old calendar against the dirty green wall. The proprietor was short and thin, in a dusty suit and a hat three sizes too small. He'd risen from a lawn-chair whose feet protruded through the curtain.

Iron Curtain, thought Johnny.

Gen-nel-men! he croaked, as they entered single-file, as required. What are you looking for today? To Johnny, he had an accent.

Just browsing, thanks, Johnny explained, doing the talking.

I know you! he shouted, recognizing Johnny.

You want records?

Not today, thanks.

You and your records, Bruce grumbled behind him.

Read this? the proprietor demanded familiarly, extending a copy of The Sunshine. It was about the crash of the U.S. space shuttle.

Terrible, terrible tragedy.

Tragedy! he repeated, exaggerating the T's.

A disaster for the aerospace program, Johnny recited.

Yeah, a disaster, he agreed. You know why?

Uh... Johnny stammered. He felt Butch and Bruce behind him, wondering why he'd brought them there.

He was fucking clueless.

The store was a disaster: clocks without hands which even the numbers had worn off the dials of, radios with ripped speaker-curtains exposing empty tubeless sockets, unplayable scratched Long Play records and broken unbreakable 78's, and Edison AMBEROLS in perfect mint condition....

There were fixtures torn from the vestibules of banks and bankers' mansions, bits of plaster molding sticking to the wires, like fragments of jaw-bone....

Carelessness, care-less-ness! The old man shrieked.

Ready? Bruce asked.

I don't see anything, just now. Johnny humored the old man. But you get more things, all the time.

It's inexhaustible, said the old man. He meant carelessness...

Bad luck, grief....

They were waiting on the sidewalk. Bruce looked bored, Butch upset.

Johnny imagined divers sifting the warm waters off the Florida coast, for pieces of fuselage. Coelacanths flitting by....

Harry! What is this city you're talking about....

Hogtown, Butch swore, once he was safely outside.

*****

Johnny caught up with them on Thing Street, before a window full of useless, rusted toys. When he pulled the price-tag attached to a wooden table in front of the door, the limb came off in his hand. Dear, at any price.

Let's go in, Butch suggested.

Here? Bruce frowned. These toys aren't real.

The proprietor waited behind a case full of lead-crystal jewelry. It felt cold in the store, so he wore merchandise, a moldering raccoon-skin coat. He sported the kind of tie Johnny associated with Hank Williams, Sr., and the back-seat of a Cadillac. He barely nodded.

That's nice, Bruce said of a desk with a tooled-leather top, and delicate legs.

Only two hundred dollars? A steal!

Actually, it is, said the man behind the counter.

If you tried to buy it downtown, you'd have to pay a lot more, Butch agreed.

You have to pay a lot more for everything, downtown, Bruce said.

They walked gingerly around 50s-style coffee-tables and groupings. A sign with an arrow pointed, MORE MERCHANDISE THIS WAY!

May we go down? Johnny asked.

Go right ahead, he said, expansively, bored.

They descended a narrow wooden staircase that had lost all its right edges from use and slopped-on paint. Downstairs Bruce and Johnny had to be careful not to bump against the low rafters. Only Butch could wander about safely.

They found a portable altar, which meant less to Bruce and Johnny than the portable sewing machine beside it. At least they knew what a sewing machine was for.

It was for last rites, Butch explained. He was also interested in the commode, especially its bowl-and-pitcher set.

Are they real? he wondered.

How can you tell? Johnny asked.

If they're real, I'd say that's an awfully good price, Bruce said, flicking the tag.

Johnny rapped the rim with his finger. It sounded flat.

No one does that anymore, Bruce told him.

I cannot lift it, he said.

My auntie owns one just like it. She lifts it every time she dusts, Butch explained.

Anything else? Bruce wanted to leave.

They ascended. The man dressed in the rotting animal skin saluted them. Looking like Hank Williams, Sr., if only he had lived. He was busy with a woman who wanted to know the price of a certain ugly lampshade she'd noticed across the street. They continued.

In a window next-door Bruce indicated two more bowl-and-pitcher sets exactly like Hank Williams, Sr.'s, green instead of blue.

C.O.N.S.T.A.N....

That's how you tell, he said.

*****

Letters stenciled on the glass doors warned them not to lean. So Johnny stooped to peer out the window at the name of the station on the tiles opposite. Butch and Bruce already knew where they were: EGGTON.

They got off the subway behind some locos who even knew on which side the platform was. A fat wench, asleep in the corner, suddenly roused herself and dashed for the platform, crushing Johnny against the rubber jamb.

That will teach you to look where you're going, Bruce said.

They watched her plough through the crowd, using her shiny black purse like a weapon, smacking girls whose yellow hair was as stiff as badgers' fur, boys whose hair was purple and lanky as vines. They pressed their thighs against the aluminum spokes of a wheel which counted them as they entered.

A turbine....

Those things scare me, Butch confessed, after successfully navigating the turnstile. They're all right for tall guys, like you....

He'd already lost his mind. Now he was afraid of losing his nuts.

*****

I love this neighborhood, Bruce said.

Eggtown was dead, a costive-looking church defecated on every corner. Judging by their fake Tudor facades, the low-rise apartment buildings had been built in the 20s and early 30s. The shoppers were middle-class whites. Lost, wide-eyed somnambulists. Not on the same meds as Thing Street. Not clozapine. Prozac ©....

I live over a store, Butch remarked.

Which store? Johnny saw, the street was all stores.

A nuts store.

Really? We should buy beer, Johnny said, if we plan to stay. To go with our nuts (salty!). Butch said nothing.

You said there was a beer store just down the street, Bruce said.

I did and there is, but that's my place right there, Butch said, pointing at the nuts store. But they continued to the Beer Store.

Butch zipped up his red and white football jacket, which made him preppy. Bruce still wore his long black leather coat, but Johnny wore only a jacket, which he didn't bother to zip up. There were clouds, but no rain. The clouds were bright, with reflected street lights.

How's work? Bruce asked.

Don't ask, Butch warned him. He had quit his old job at the bank. He worked in a dentist's office.

What exactly do you do? Johnny was curious.

I'm a dental assistant.

Oh? He thought only women were dental assistants.

Are you still planning on going back to Med School? Bruce asked.

Butch always wanted to be a doctor....

If they'll let me. I might go back to Windsor next summer. They passed a doughnut shop where middle-aged losers in dirty rain-coats nursed weak coffees in the fly-specked window. It was an installation, about aging.

At least you're doing what you want, Johnny observed. Butch always wanted to be a doctor..

I hate it, he said.

At least you're making money.

You kidding? Butch used to go out a lot; Johnny used to hear them, making plans for the evening.

At Brewer's Retail Johnny regarded the sibilant steel rollers, the tiled floor, the advertisements for tall brown lagers with lots of head. Like the cashiers.

Blue? Bruce asked.

We could split eighteen, Butch volunteered. He wanted to save money.

Eighteen Blue, Bruce ordered. Easier to say than Budweiser.

Twelve Bud, Johnny ordered.

Twelve Bud, barked a clean-cut cashier in a polo shirt. His tan was the colour of the lager in the advertisement. They wanted that, but all they could afford was beer.

Johnny explained, Budweiser wasn't a light beer; it was just as strong as the others, only smoother.

They ignored him. Fucking know-all. Should've been a professor.

They stepped onto the mat, which triggered the EXIT door. Five minutes to ten, the traffic was steady on Eggton.

A bum in his winter coat and toque (I am Dadanian) leered gap-toothed over a mountain of laundry in a shopping cart parked before the darkened windows of yet another vacant store.

He looked familiar....

Most of the stores were closed, or closing. For a world-class city, it sure went to bed early....

A few stragglers loitered between the tables in a book store, examining dust jackets featuring photos of Jane Jacobs.

Damn, she was pretty.

It wasn't exactly Vegas. It wasn't even The Deuce Not even AFTER Disney....

There's the competition! Butch indicated a sign in the second-story window of a very ugly, rectangular glass and concrete building: DENTAL SURGEON.

That's where you should send your boss's patients when you get fired, Bruce suggested.

First change one letter, Johnny added.

Yeah, that's what I'll do. Butch liked the idea.

*****

Now the door beside the nuts store was shut, but Butch had his keys. He let them in and they clamored upstairs ahead of him, bottles clinking. The walls had lately been painted beige. Butch's door was at the head of the stairs; when he opened it, he had to stop a big beige cat with his foot.

Get inside! He draped his red and white jacket over the back of a vinyl-covered kitchen-chair and immediately began to put the beer away in the fridge. The cat rubbed against his legs.

She wants milk, Butch explained. Get away, he ordered her. There's no milk. The cat looked ragged. Butch had given it a hair-cut, a bad one.

It's already chilled, Bruce said, from the livingroom. He removed the chair from the small library table and sat down.

How about one? he called.

Do you mind if I look at your books? Johnny asked.

Not at all. Go ahead. They're mainly medical books, he explained. Most of were still in boxes, piled behind the chest of drawers that made a partition across the middle of the long room. Some occupied a small shelf between the two windows, a neat row with strong, utilitarian spines: medical text-books. All the rest was LITERATURE....

That didn't take long, Butch remarked dryly from one of the kitchen chairs. Johnny sat on a blue blanket on the couch, which was really a cot. Butch offered glasses.

I'm O.K, Johnny said.

No, thank you. This is safer. Bruce took a swig from the bottle. I can't wait to see your place, Johnny.

He thought of his apartment. There were books stacked double on metal shelves, and records, thousands of them, in rows of milk crates on the floor. Most of the books were useless, shipped to him by the truckload, by Ma after she sold the Old Homestead: The Book of Knowledge, The Makers of Dadania, etc.

They offered Johnny permanent full-time, Bruce said.

Congratulations. Butch would have had it, if he'd stayed. How's Tony?

He hasn't been offered permanent full-time, but apart from that....

He's Tony. Johnny completed the thought.

They argue all the time, Bruce whispered.

It used to be me, Butch said.

Pioneers of Alienation

It's Johnny now. On his birthday we went to the Cameron and they got into this big argument, because Tony refused to remove his tie after Johnny removed his collar, and Johnny insisted that everybody had to move to a table in the middle of the room, to get closer to reality.

Yeah?

They got into a political discussion. Which all boiled down to something neither of them could see....

I know what you're going to say, Johnny said.

We have total freedom here, even if nobody takes advantage of it; we still have it.

It's worthless.

That's beside the point.

Johnny saw how Butch sat on the plastic-upholstered kitchen-chair, his left foot under his right thigh, his right hand steadying a glass of foamy beer on his knee.

Don't worry; I'm comfortable like this. Continue.

I don't know exactly how to put it, Johnny resumed, but Tony himself was the best illustration of the weakness of his position.

How so? Bruce demanded. Butch moved; his own position was becoming untenable.

I mean the weakness of his argument that anyone can, is that no one does.

I don't ....

Follow conversation? I mean Tony himself never exercises the freedom he has.

Example?

That night, when he said he normally wouldn't go into a place like the Cameron. Of course, there are places where one simply cannot go, for fear of something terrible happening, but they are far fewer than the places we can go, but won't. It seems Tony....

What a priss, they thought.

I like Alena though, Butch interrupted.

It's as if he.... Johnny wanted to say something more about their ties, how Tony didn't appear to understand, wearing a tie all day at work, was hypocrisy, or nothing was. Unless, that is, he liked to; he knew, he didn't. That's why he refused to remove his tie! Tony could wear his tie in the shower, to prove his point, but Johnny knew better. He could wear it, with Alena....

Excuse me, honey. May I say something? Butch interrupted. Johnny glanced at Bruce, who seemed to be having trouble focusing.

I like Alena, Butch repeated, emphatically.

More than Tony? Bruce doubted.

What do they have in common? I'd like to know, Butch said.

Nothing, so far as I can see. Bruce peered into the bottom of his bottle. It's sex.

Because he brought her over?

Yes, from Czechoslovakia.

She doesn't have to stay with him, Johnny protested.

Who else is she going to stay with?

Plenty of things.

She's in love with the guy!

Oh. Johnny wasn't impressed.

Haven't you ever been in love?

With a guy?

Well, if you had, you wouldn't need to ask, he said, huffily.

I think they're a lot alike.

Alena? Tony?

Yes, Johnny affirmed.

Alena's intelligent. Tony's ....

Out for a good time.

You have to admit it.

But Alena's the same.

No, no. Butch shook his head. I like Alena.

*****

Butch put his favorite Streisand album on the stereo.

We always danced to this, he explained, as he twirled around the room, with the tonsured cat.

He abruptly sat down again on the vinyl-upholstered kitchen-chair. Before the dance he had removed his shoes; he wore thick, blue cotton socks, with a rib. The cat wriggled out of his arms and scrambled under the bed.

I just cut her hair last weekend, he explained, in answer to the silent question.

Oh?

All weekend. He made a scissors motion with the fingers of one hand.

Did she like it?

Why do you think it took so long?

I suppose it reduces shedding.

Yeah. You should have seen her after we took her to a real barber. Looked just like a Pomeranian. What was really funny, after my father saw her he burst out laughing. The cat was embarrassed! Hid under the bed, and refused to come out. Like now. When I was living with my father. He stared into another bottle.

Your parents are divorced?

Separated.

Johnny put on some Jolson. It was a reissue of recordings that had been made on 78s for a Victrola. Butch's stereo grew horns.

*****

One Saturday night
They had nothing to do
So they started counting
All the girlies they knew.

Friday counted out thirteen
And Crusoe said brother
Thirteen's unlucky
Let's go get another!

On their island lived wild men
And cannibals swimmin'
You know where there's wild men
There must be wild women

O, what did Robinson Crusoe do
With Friday on Saturday night....

Al Jolson

*****

They hadn't heard anything from Bruce, for ages. The record had stopped, Bruce nodded his head to music that only he could hear, nodding himself to sleep.

Bruce? Butch walked over and shook him. Bruce sang a few snatches. Johnny suspected he wasn't as drunk as he looked.

I think Bruce is going to have to stay here to-night, Butch said, making a prognosis positive.

Actually, Johnny glanced at his watch, I wouldn't mind somewhere to stay to-night....

You're welcome to sleep here if you want, Bruce offered, suddenly quite sober.

The all night bus stops just outside the door, but you're welcome to stay if you want. Butch made that much clear, before turning to Bruce. Bruce! he shouted at him, slumped over again in his chair. We'll have to share the bed. Johnny's staying too. Bruce rose and walked over to the bed without any difficulty. He started to strip. Butch prepared the couch, which was a cot anyway.

Oh, don't bother.

It's no trouble.

Johnny draped the blanket Butch gave him over his legs. He was aware of Bruce watching from the bed, and Butch standing in the middle of the room, a pillow-case over his arm, like a waiter.

Are you sure you're going to be warm enough?

Oh, sure.

Well, I know I'm going to be warm enough, Bruce asserted as he yanked his pants off. And I'm not sleeping in my clothes, either.

Butch began to unbutton his shirt, so Johnny did too. Finally, he swung his legs out from under the blanket and removed his pants, in what he realized was a prudish parody of Bruce's strip-tease.

Butch sat down again on the vinyl-upholstered chair, his throne, wearing just panties and socks. He looked very large and white.

What are you doing? Bruce called from the bed. He had promised himself that he wouldn't be cold.

Nursing my beer, he said, his left foot under his right thigh, his right hand steadying the foamy glass on his knee.
There's something no one can take away from us, he mused.
Yeah? What's that?
Our small-town virtue.
Johnny fell asleep dreaming of the Mounties and their musical ride.
Creaking bed-springs woke him up in the middle of the night.

Sorry to do this to you, JOHNNY!

In the half-light over the nuts store, he was hard....
Watching Bruce fuck Butch up the ass.

Now-ow, he barked.

*****

Stuff it in! Cram it in!

*****

Over the quiet bay
in the dusk a cannonade
ended Dadania Day
like an ambuscade.

Fathers of family,
breadwinners, had to take
responsibility
for the childrens' sake.

Exhibits that weren't seen
coupons they never cashed
unused bottles of green
catchup had to be trashed.

After a scarlet rush
of mounties in a glade
a profound black hush
followed their cavalcade.

*****

Trixie was promoted to lead of Brad's section, after Brad was promoted to General Supervisor. A lateral move. All on the Q.T. Very hush, hush!
She still lived at home with an Italian father, and a Quebecois mother. Her parents flew back to their base in Sicily, returning for a few days once a year, heavier by several pounds of valuable coke.
Her father ran a construction company....
Her brother, Federico Fellini, was an insane genius. He played the piano, and collected guns.
Trixie wanted him to wear tapered shirts, tight pants, purple shoes. Like Michael, or Rick....
He continued to prefer Chopin, to Rick James....

*****

Butch always wanted to be a doctor....
He would rather have been a ballsy-voiced announcer for Citizen Hearse's Milquetoast Broadcasting Company....
Than Trixie's clerk, in The East....
Which, it seemed, he would be, forever....

Butch and his friends mattered nothing to Trixie; they couldn't possibly imagine what she did, all night. What did they know, about LUSH LIFE? Even her father never guessed. Too busy in the cellar, stuffing corpses....

After coming home she went straight to the sofa in the den where her stereo was, to listen to R & B....

Till she fell. Into a deep, catatonic stupor....

She had to work that Saturday, as did everyone else from The East, which was always behind. Only she really WANTED to, because of the new auditor, an over-dressed young Jamaican stud named Owen, whom Trixie affectionately called Tetsuni.

Trixie admired Owen's look: the tight jeans, the pearl-gray sweatshirt for weekends, the heavy gold chains....

There they were, in the P/Bigge Bank of Hogtown....

Tetsuni made it perfectly clear, he wanted nothing to do with her, despite her arbitrary preference for black men....

Even over-dressed fags....

A butterfly, with an undeveloped brain....

An Occupational Wanderer....

*****

Bruce was bored by Trixie's daily reiteration of last night's disaster.

Every night her boyfriend promised her a big excursion to Buffalo, after he cashed her check. Then he leapt straight from the flashing ATM, into the waiting taxi....

He shouted, Later, Baby!

They named him Cadillac Baby, after the big, over-dressed stud on a Blues record that Johnny brought to work one day. They admired the cover, and read the liner notes describing how the original bought wine for drunks who called him The Man from God. He founded his own record company, and always drove a bright pink Cadillac....

Trixie had to call her father every pay-day Thursday, to tell him not to cash the check for her portion of the mortgage payment.

Someone was screwing around with her account....

She was....

*****

Bruce had stories too, but he wouldn't talk about private school, where he'd gone as a mature student and met the business elite. The tender friendships, the fucking up the ass....

As if they didn't already know, Bruce in red suspenders, button-down collars and well-tailored jackets that fitted him too perfectly....

He'd replaced Butch. The new boyfriend, a fellow alumnus, the source of the smart clothes, was usually away on a buying-trip for Lady Eatone. It really was too absolutely perfect....

One night Johnny and Bruce were walking through the arcade under the Bank, when they met Bruce's friend. He liked silos, and crop-dusting. He wore an ear-ring! Bruce refused to introduce them....

Deane!

Deane was a.... Fag?!

*****

That's Bruce for you, Joy said. She was one of the other Italian women who worked for the Department. She was Trixie's best friend. They enrolled in the same courses, like Jazz Dancing at Massive College, then dropped out, to study Karaoke.

They were inseparable, losers....

They loitered about the shops and restaurants of the Lady Eatone Centre, admiring the over-dressed bucks from Buffalo, with other Occupational Wanderers.

They leaned on the white metal railing of the highest gallery, like the bridge of the Titanic, with a view of steerage, discussing Tetsunies. It was like a pop song....

Autumn....

*****

Joy followed Johnny underground to the bank, beneath abstract masses of concrete and steel, past rows of stores with iron grills that were always closed.

They chatted, emerging through the thigh-polished turnstile at the station.

While Johnny diverged from the main channel of pedestrians, and climbed a gentle concrete slope with a heavy chrome railing overlooking an artificial fountain, Joy clung to him.

They queued outside a coffee-shop, with heavy, bespectacled businessmen and over-dressed secretaries.

In a glass case were muffins, bagels, and assorted cakes.

The Pyrex urns were constantly replenished by the proprietor's handsome son.

You know, I was thinking about you, Joy murmured, beside him.

When?

Just now, she said, brushing her dark, Egyptian hair out of her eyes. On the subway.

Well?

I was talking to Trixie, last night. You know, we were supposed to take Jazz Dancing, but we only had fifteen minutes to get to College and Dung. We didn't feel like Jazz Dancing. More like The Blues....

Johnny smiled.

Trixie said you walked her to Dungass. She showed me the album you bought her....

The women behind the counter wore uniforms: short green-and-white dresses, and green scarves that wouldn't stay on as they poured coffee, mocha or java or Columbian, or one of the syrupy Specials, rum or orange or cheese-cake java....

It was really SWEET.... The record, she meant.

I bought it for the cover, Johnny explained.

I thought it was funny. The Cadillac Baby album. He knew Trixie would understand.

I thought it was sweet, Joy repeated. Trixie was depressed. She appreciated it.

I enjoyed the walk. I appreciated it.

Yes, but it was nice. Joy smiled, and groped for his hand. I just wish there weren't these misunderstandings.

Oh.

I know that you and Bruce were talking, about me ....

Johnny knew that Bruce had received a message on the back of a Hallmark card. To live life to the fullest, avoid misunderstandings....

But I think you should understand what kind of person Bruce is. She meant he was a.... Fag.

Then it was Johnny's turn....

*****

Johnny! Trixie called him, from her desk in The East.

I'm so depressed, she said. Johnny smiled because he heard that phrase, before the relation of some amorous misadventure involving money and drugs.

I didn't sleep at all last night, she complained. We spent half the night looking for a hotel room, where we could just....

Get high?

high, high
Up in the hills,
Watching the clouds
roll
by....

The other half, she continued, looking for a money machine that was still open, after we found out we didn't have any cash.

You mean, after you looked in your purse and realized, Cadillac had stolen it, Johnny corrected her.

Whatever, Trixie said. I'm angry.

Bruce had warned him about being too critical.

When we finally got to a friend's place, the friend wouldn't give him anything unless I stayed with him for a while, just the two of us, in the bathroom. Then Caddy kept saying I was taking it all, he wasn't getting any. I couldn't get high anyway, because I was so worried about him. I didn't want it, but he kept saying I was taking it all.

If that's all he was worried about, he trailed off.

Yes, she confessed. I've thought about that.

How did you feel?

Like smashing their pipes in their faces.

Oh.

*****

Trixie posed while the young men rested. Conspicuous in turquoise slacks. Bruce's trousers were a faded brown, his shirt pink. Johnny wore a navy suit.

Why don't you write us a bad check, like you do Caddy? Bruce suggested.

I could, you know.

We know, so why don't you?

Okay Johnny, Trixie said, as she bent towards him her hawk-like profile, turning her back on Bruce. Give me a check.

What if I don't have one with me?

You have one. Give it to me; give it to me! She laughed and cried, leaning against his shoulder.

Ask Bruce.

Don't bother. I don't have any either.

Johnny removed a gold-colored check from its fake-Florentine folder. At least, he said, writing an amount, fifty dollars, in the column on the right, I don't carry them on the outside, like Butch.

That reminds me, Bruce spoke, aroused by Johnny's statement, today he got his first credit card.

O God! Trixie cradled her head in her hands.

At Simpson's.

He's right. He spent half the morning, when he should have been answering the damned phone, showing the thing to his buddies upstairs, as if they cared, Trixie wailed.

He showed it to me too, while I was trying to balance, Bruce continued. He waved the damned thing in my face. I get the impression these things really matter, to Butch.

Yeah? You're a hypocrite. Johnny taunted him.

*****

They hadn't eaten yet, because Bruce had to clear twenty million dollars before close-off at three, and somewhere he'd mislaid nineteen cents. On the tenth and twentieth of the month every adjustment, transaction, statistic had to be recorded if it were to appear in time for the long sheets of information that were printed then, at branches as nearby as downstairs and as far away as Quebec. Bruce had only solved one problem to discover another, that he had allowed two million dollars to languish a fortnight in a no-interest account.

All this upset him, so much that he wanted to quit again. He should have been a Drama Teacher....

At five, when most things had already gone home, except for a few things working overtime in Taxes because the annual bills had just come in, Bruce emerged from his meeting with the Supervisor of New Loans and signaled to Johnny to accompany him downstairs. Johnny carried a copy of Madame Bovary and copies of his own poems and stories. All the way down on the escalator they joked about Girlfriend and her Tetsuni, Cadillac Baby.

At the foot of the escalator they met Carlotta, Girlfriend's own girlfriend, a Taiwanese woman in tight black slacks and a see-through blouse with an Iron Maiden T-shirt underneath. Carlotta had been Trixie's typist in the East, but she had never been permanently hired by the Bank, which exploited her as a Temp.

You and your girlfriend are a couple of Bovaries, Johnny said.

Ovaries? Carlotta pondered.

Because Emma Bovary always cared more for style than substance. The way you care for slick Tetsunies, especially if they're jokers and scoundrels.

Then they noticed Cadillac Baby waiting on a nearby bench, wasted-looking in a nylon jacket, trying to smile.

*****

He imagined how Trixie would have alternated between feigned disappointment and contrived confusion, her purse stuffed with worthless newsprint, as she turned from the marble and gazed at the twenty-foot tree, all tinsel, as if in her present exigency she hated Christmas....

It's so expensive!

She could have meant the lobby, the clusters of heavy brown leather chairs, the thick pile, the white terrazzo, the mezzanine with somnolent messengers, the buff sofas, the iron railings, the bronze friezes, the TINSEL....

What about the Special? Carlotta demanded, taking her narrowly.

Ask him!

I'm so embarrassed. She whispered to Carlotta the way things do at concerts, although there were only a few alcoholics sprawled in armchairs, or on sofas. They weren't listening....

All right. I'll ask.

She leaned across the counter into the neon penumbra, till the black and aluminum sign, RECEPTION, fell before the sleeve of her pea-jacket, with a metallic clatter.

Pioneers of Alienation

She spread her fingers like crab claws, pressed her palms against the marble, and squinted into the light as if she were looking up under tons of seawater.

Like she'd drowned....

*****

Like somebody forgot to pay the Hydro....

Before her eyes grew accustomed to the green light she thought, there's no on here! Then she discovered the figure of a clerk, silhouetted against the glow of indirect lighting, the blue blazer and grey slacks of Dadanian Pacifier. He was a study in angularity, arms akimbo, skin exposed at neck and ankles. He would have shown plenty of wrist too, only he stuck his hands in his rear pockets, under the flap of his coat-tails.

Excuse me! The silent effort of a submarine animal would not have been more weakly acknowledged.

He didn't immediately revolve to confront her, though his ears looked sufficiently large and high to have heard. When she telegraphed the bell with her palm, he shot up, like fireworks.

He drew his hands from his pockets, as if for ballast, and pressed his fingers against the ledge over the till. He was young, but not so young one didn't wonder if he weren't too old, to be only a clerk even in this great Hotel. He performed menial tasks against the static foil of others' elegance, his alacrity diminishing with every repetition. It was nearly gone. Futility hung about him, like a stain in water.

Carlotta thought he looked kind of nice. Maybe, somewhere, under the livery of Dadasdian Pacificier, was a long, hard penis.

May I help you? He asked, innocently.

A room.

Will that be double, or single? He drew the ledger closer, and opened it at the place with one deft movement of his long fingers. He already had a pen poised, conjured out of the air, to magically inscribe her name.

Double, pwease. The baby-talking girl!

Certainly. He bowed and smiled through several shades of monotony. He made her feel that barriers had been lowered, knots untied, red tape cut. For her.

You expect to stay?

To-night! She told him, suddenly angry.

Room 401!

*****

They enter confusing their pseudonyms,
names like Comestock, Amore, Meurdesoif,
and their dates arrive, preceded
by one man holding his hands to his face,
unseeing, and groping for the wall, and followed
by men calling Police! Police! and asking
the way to the Mens' Room. Sprayed in the face
with mace! Enter black girls. Quick honey!
she says (who kissed you once saying
Now you've been kissed by a whore, dear)
Gimme the key to four oh one.
And they rise in the elevator
when the others come back yelling
Two black girls sprayed him in the face!
And you say not one word and they
But didn't you see two black girls? Black?
And you say you saw two things enter
but aren't sure they were black, or girls.
And that big truck driver named Amore,
shirt open to his navel and big gold rings
gleaming on his fists, comes to your desk
and tells you he admires your operation
and to your raised eye-brows grunts Come on, fellow. –
and you mutter that you hope he enjoys his visit
(careful not to add please come again, sir!)
when finally the police arrive, Englishmen
sporting brave mustachios, while the girls

descend in their machine, and rise again.
Last the pimp comes jiving to his big
transistors asking, What's happening, man?
The small crowd gathered around your desk
only smiles when you tell him, Nothing, man.

AMEN!

*****

How many strange things he realized, leaving. If the number of epiphanies that occurred at the elevators was any indication, the god of gates ruled them too.

Are you coming? Bruce appeared in the doorway, the door propped against his shoulder, like the lid of a jack-in-the-box who would disappear again, as soon as the clockwork stopped.

Collette and Elsie laughed equally at Bruce's indignant clown face, and at Johnny's endeavor not to notice, or at least to seem unhurried, as he cleared his calculator repeatedly, to get enough tape to tear off. A tick of his. He stood and patted his thigh for his wallet, and finding it not there, opened a desk drawer crowded with the usual clerical detritus of paper clips and elastics and offal from past coffee breaks like old rotten creamers and damp sugar bags, and dirty stirsticks.

He found the wallet under a tin of shoe polish, and an accumulation of napkins, added to by Brad Rippley and himself after every foray on cafeteria and kiosk.

Beside the pile of napkins was a sheaf of papers that he scribbled a few lines on, whenever he had a break and no one was watching.

Just a minute, he said. He decided he could use the napkins and stuffed them in his pocket. He left the sheaf where it was, covered with coffee-stains and the words

My Monologue
(A Fruit Voice)

During weeks of overtime I came early to leave early, the sun flooded the dark Van der Rohe panels till it hurt my eyes and I had to clamber over desks and radiators to pull the cord and draw the Venetian blind. Even without the sun it was too hot in Brad's office, the control dial on the radiator a placebo, like the knob on the fake consoles engineers used to give conductors to keep them busy. Stokowski, doing Fantasia.

Alas, Brad was no maitre. The disorder of pointlessly numbered and dated files and correspondence was Bohemian.

It was not the discarded slag of recently completed or ongoing work.

It was alive....

Apart from the unmanageable heater and the sun itself, which was unmanageable but free, something Southern and rank warmed the place. There was Brad's aloe vera plant, which at Christmas we decorated with cotton batting and tinsel, in lieu of a tree.

Brad came from Houston.

Trixie said that explained his slowness.

I remembered how even during overtime Brad tended to be late. I would be cleaning my shoes in his office, the tin and a pile of napkins beside me on the radiator when he came at half past eight or a quarter to nine. Usually he would say nothing as he hung his buff winter coat in the shallow closet by the door, but on a bad morning when he was especially late and his large wife had already called about him twice, he would complain that the polish stank and wish that I would do that somewhere else, because someday the President would notice.

Brad used to make me so angry when he went to lunch with Butch. In theory it was no one's business whom you lunched with, especially when the time was yours, but in practice it was a public matter if you lunched with someone who was considered bad company by Management.

One afternoon Bruce staggered down the pale corridor; the President's bloodshot eye arrested him.

I don't want to see you go to lunch with Trixie ever again!

I always thought his authoritarianism was out of place in that mixed office. Beneath the paternal demeanor, was a terrible waste balefulness....

Like a stump-lot, from the air....

The Great White Father.

Bruce once remarked that the President was Irish, and being Irish myself I amused myself by wondering if we shared some atavistic traits, without liking him any better, which was probably very Irish.

Unlike Clancy I did not bother to appear benign, but immediately indulged myself in displays of lost temper, which could not help but seem fulminous and even downright mephitic, coming from below as they did.

I told Brad never to desert me, especially when I was on the phones and all the lines began to sing, and I had to put things on hold while I took their messages one by one.

Brad said Colette was on the phones too.

She interrupted before he could ask whether the lines had really been so busy.

There was no problem John, Colette said. I was a big baby, as well as a windbag, but he interrupted her to shout.

Enough. Colette that's enough. I heard him mutter sotto voce that I wouldn't be there much longer anyway, but when a few minutes later he asked me over the noise of running water in Men's if I were finished, I was so confused by what he meant that I couldn't answer.

I concluded, he wanted to get rid of me. I was wrong.

Instead he invited me to run with him and I recommended Massive House. That should have given me away right there.

He was remarkably friendly, and I imagined him socializing with unemployed farmhands and crapshooters, all wearing suspenders. (His last pair had been appropriated by his sister after they left Houston.) One thing led to another and after a few sessions he had me over. His blond wife was pregnant again and lonely as ever.

There had always been doldrums in my own life when, baffled by circumstance, I would have stagnated had it not been for some petty or even illusory objective. I believe that Brad was similarly driven by motives other than pure and noble friendship. Brad's friendship was the apocalypse of friendly arcana, once I got him in the shower....

I remembered a lecture by a man from Premises, sponsored by the Fire Department, the purport of which was that though we might be immolated with the other chattels, or asphyxiated in a stairwell, the building was structurally sound.

Structurally sound, but functionally rotten. Too many stories, too many levels, while every crevasse and every stairwell only meant access to higher plateaus of difficulty.

The Bank was a caricature of those illustrations in books like The Origin of Species, where some nebulous Life-Force in the upper left-hand corner refines and defines itself through numerous incarnations, in a Hegelian dialectic of clumsy Edsels annihilating one another for the sake of later Fords.

At the Bank the anima vitae did not evolve, it devolved. An amorphous power at the top (of the page) extracted life-force from increasingly depleted sources, and finally manifested itself in a three-piece suit older and cheaper even than theirs, at the epiphanic Annual Banquet of the Institute of Dadanian Wankers.

The Department was a great open factory, with arborite desks arranged under rectangles of hydro-electric tubing, so without shadow or relief that one could stand at the window at one end of the building, and turn and sight along a row of desks, through the file-room and out the window at the other end, into the window of the next building, along an identical line of desks, etc. There was no privacy, only abstract and artificial sections which were really spheres (rectangles? squares?) of some insidious interest.

After all, it was a bank.

*****

Brad had me.... over.

Here we are.

We got off the bus and headed across the empty parking lot of a Brewers Retail outlet, towards a small apartment building in need of paint....

Poverty Alley, where Brad lives.

The apartment consisted of a kitchen, a large living room and dining area, two bedrooms (one for the child and one for Brad and Laurie) and (of course) a bathroom with a shower Brad shared with me, to conserve water.

*****

One evening for exercise we ran through a large cemetery that had fallen into desuetude, not for want of death and burial, but because of new laws passed by the Borough regarding the water-table.

I remember it was raining, and thinking it was a good thing Brad's new quartz watch was waterproof, as the alarm began to bleat a few blocks from home and he suggested we run the rest of the way.

In a corner of the living-dining area we did sit-ups, holding each other's feet. Since I was the guest he waved me into the shower first, and I blasted the water like he told me to, but when I had finished and cut off the spray I could hear Brad and his wife and an unidentified woman laughing and talking.

I emerged in my street clothes, and the talk and the laughter ceased.

Meet my sister, Diane. She was a tall girl with a lot of blond hair. She would have looked good on a horse, whether or not she could ride.

For supper we had a cold soup of tomatoes and onions, something Brad had learned to make in his Houston days, roast beef and cauliflower sprinkled with cheese, and for dessert a great parfait in a tall glass.

Laurie thinks big, he said.

While we sipped coffee, Laurie and Diane discussed the latest headline in the Sun, about street prostitution in Hogtown. They were generally sympathetic to the prostitutes, who had been driven out of the downtown hotels, and forced to solicit on Thing Street. Brad acted the responsible paterfamilias, not caring where they solicited, so long as they didn't do it around his little girl. I kept out of the conversation as much as possible, but I must have betrayed my allegiance to the ladies, because from time to time I caught Brad smiling at me, as if it amused him to find his sister and his wife siding with whores.

With me!

*****

Our friendship ended that summer the Department went to the Island for baseball. Brad laughed at my statuesque pose on the bow of the Sam McFee, propping myself against the railing with the bat like a cane.

Trixie fought the wind for control of her hair, while Bruce prodded her about her vanity. Brad's friend, Ed, joined us from foreign exchange, and Butch was there too, in a sweat-suit and a little cap. I was to have joined the team also, but I confess when I saw how hard they threw that ball during warmup, and remembered how Gina from Arrears had had her collar-bone broken by an erratic throw, I was afraid and decided to keep score.

I had already had some of the beer they'd cooled in the roots of a tree at the water's edge, and I wasn't interested in baseball anyway, so I immediately lost count.

The game was as exotic to me as a Japanese Noh play. There was something stylized and ritualistic about the angle and direction of a peaked cap, the rhythm with which a player pounded his fist into his glove, the way the pitcher shifted his weight from left to right foot on the mound. Certainly ritualistic and stylized, so much activity could not have been accounted for otherwise.

Naturally I could not say whose turn it was at bat, whether we were in the ninth inning or the tenth, etc.

Brad stood above me in his Houston shirt, and massaged my upper arm as if my inattention were the result of poor circulation....

I was alert, not to the game as a game, but as a series of isolated events. I accepted it, but on an impressionistic level, as if I had just flown in from Paris, or Mars....

I perceived a large green space dotted with white diamonds connected by sandy paths, treed in the distance a darker green dominated by the large grey structures of the Banks.

The Hotel squatted before them.

It might have been Hogtown, New York, or Xanadu.

It could have been August 1984 or a thousand years earlier, or later. I thought we resembled serfs, dancing in the shadow of our masters' castle. Every summer different serfs, but the same shadow, the same castle. Really we were just insects, fruit-flies.

Laurie arrived with Christen, who was immediately, ostentatiously adopted by Trixie. The game ended and, thanks to me, it was uncertain whether we had defeated Royal Trust. As they strode to the Pavilion, they challenged us to a re-match. Brad, Ed, Butch and I walked the girls to their table, and left our gear in their keeping for the run.

I did not scruple to exploit the advantage, having rested while they exhausted themselves at their game, running bases and cavorting upon them after they had made them, and swinging the bat many more times than it took to weigh it, with that shouting back-thumping thigh-slapping heartiness they could have dispensed with entirely had they been sincere, and a thousand other unnecessary, yes, ritualized gestures.

I would not run abreast of anyone, but took the lead as we pounded along the boardwalk beside the lake. I heard Brad tell Ed behind me that I must be in condition, since I was setting the pace.

He was right. The times we had run together helped. The first time he had urged me to go faster, thinking I had untouched reserves. If I had none, his flattery would have made them. I acknowledged his generous encouragement by defeating him the second time.

Today, however, it was rest that gave me the lead, and the sheer joy I felt at running on wood beside water, instead of the hard pavement of Thing Street. Behind me I heard Brad tell Ed how much he preferred to run with things than alone, but till now had only run with his brother and myself. Even that distinction could not make me relent, or when, with a last desperate effort, Brad strained to pull aside of me, sighing my name into my ear....

Brad and Ed stalked off to the washroom, while Butch talked to Laurie and Trixie teased me about my legs.

Where we sat on the north side of the Island we had a view of Hogtown, gray and moated with here and there a red light, a floating mirage unsupported by anything solid, the scrap of waterfront no longer green anywhere, but purple and gray.

Brad and Ed returned, like a couple, still in track suits, bearing a tall glass of foamy brown beer in each hand, which with the stateliness required to prevent spillage, made them resemble children in a religious procession.

Like self-conscious children they stared over the rims of their glasses, at the contents of which they were loathe to lose a single precious drop.

Pioneers of Alienation

Over the noise of the ferry docking, the sounds of speech and laughter and movement that equally unite guests in a dining-room, or passengers on a ship, I heard the little girl Christen ask Butch if he were gay.

*****

The Sam McFee had been to Hogtown and returned to the Island for the last time that evening. Suddenly my companions disturbed the purses and duffel bags at their feet, quaffed the dregs if there were any, and rose en masse to make the boat. Because I had waited so long for my beer to be served, I still had nearly a full glass.

The amber liquid under the patio lights that appeared as the last daylight faded, might have been some deadly toxin or heavy narcotic as it retarded me now, and, like the Liebestrank, created an excuse.

They had families whose routine must not be interrupted more than absolutely necessary, children whom they supposed had to be told good-night if they were to sleep at all, lunches which they had to make themselves as if no one else could do it better and they really were required by diet. Play was only a masquerade for work, and though they conceded something to the disguise, it could never be serious, or allowed to develop in any way but what conduced to the morning, since seriousness and the morning were equally the prerogatives of work. Wasn't that what baseball was all about?

Brad stood over me briefly, and massaged my arm as he had done, whenever I seemed inattentive, or asleep.

You haven't finished your beer.

I thought that much was obvious, and that he would not to let it delay him, with his duffel bag in his hand and Laurie and the little girl already halfway to the dock. Christen turned and called him by his first name.

I'm leaving. See you.

The End

Just a minute, Johnny Midas repeated.

The wind the door made shutting dispersed the last traces of Moreen and Joanne's laughter, as the clamor of typewriter and telephone resumed its usual self-importance. Like the resumption of hostilities after a cease-fire, Johnny supposed.

Not that anything had been established. Last night the Jays had finally (but not permanently) defeated the Mets six to one in the last inning. Keith would return to the file room as if he had taken a great liberty in delivering that information, and attack his mail with renewed vigor.

What is the matter with you? Bruce stood before the bank of elevators, the stone wall behind him like faded cork, and berated him. It was like waiting for Henry James to finish a sentence.

Johnny said he was sorry but he'd forgotten his pass. He didn't elaborate what he'd been through getting it back from Brad Rippley, how he'd paused respectfully on the threshold of Brad's sanctum, while he went through the charade of remembering.

It's always something. Your wallet, your pass. I'm surprised you remember your name.

They turned the corner, and since the down escalator was clogged with stationary things, they descended the marble stairs without touching the railing. They crossed the corridor, dodging pedestrians from left and right, like cars in the north and south lanes of a superhighway. It was only safe to cross at designated intersections, only there were none, so they forgot their manners and barged ahead, with an ironic, inaudible excuse me.

*****

They served Seafood Tetrazzini at the old lunch-counter in the basement of Robert Simpson's. Johnny wondered if he had any of her records. Or was she too early?

The counter was trident-shaped. They sat on chromium and red vinyl-upholstered stools. The cutlery was stored in gray styrene buckets under yellow arborite, which white-haired waitresses in pale green uniforms periodically wiped, with damp rags smelling of bleach and burnt skin. Dessert waited safely under a glass shelf that followed the trident but was open in back, a gem of hygiene, circa 1930.

Sometimes it felt like he had been in Hogtown since then, although he was still a clerk in a bank and only twenty-six years old. His father was dead and his mother living, though he wouldn't call it that, in Maypole City. He was the youngest of three siblings, the baby. He had left home when he was twenty. He could only have been there, at most, for six years....

There was Thing Street and the Cameron with the bakery beside it and the Hunkie church across the street. South on Badhearse the cattle from the Circus used to graze, women from the neighborhood were allowed to milk them for free, and could be seen early in the morning in August and September, like Laura Secord, strolling to the Circus grounds with slop-buckets in their hands, behind the old Asylum....

Thing Street Asylum

*****

He used to carry a large tan portfolio, everywhere he went. Langmuir Luggage! He wished he had it now, not that he ever used the envelopes and papers that it contained, or that it was not an object of scorn as a prop or affectation, but it was always so handy with crowds. He bought it at the Sally Anne.

He often went to the Richmond Street store to dig for treasure buried among the debris of toilets and filing cabinets and phonographs, civilization as he was certain it would be after a nuclear attack, if it wasn't already.

As he hesitated on the narrow iron step, about to descend into the ceaseless basement clatter and confusion, it was as if he had arrived in the aftermath of terrible violence.

A customer stumbled over something and broke it, another stumbled upon it and in the effort to extricate it from the bottom of the pile broke it again. A clerk shouted at them to take it easy.

A terrific storm that had scoured the contents of things' lives, from cellar to attic, mashed them indecently together, and deposited the mess just where it settled there.

What else could it have been, but some great collective disaster?

The sinking of an ocean liner.

The Mariposa Belle or the Sam McFee....

Full of – Kiwanis Club Presidents!

The Titanic!

The burning of a grand hotel, a bank or an asylum.

The ruins not Atlantis with pennants of seaweed streaming from its spires and coelacanths slithering past allegorical figures of Honour and Glory Crowning Time, but THING STREET.

THING STREET ASYLUM....

Nothing of which something can be made.

The rubbish of as many disasters as there were things in the world. Now with fission happening simultaneously.

Only some intimate volumes, with addresses of ruined houses on dysfunctional side-streets still legible in the margins, like eggs in the cook's pantry after the iron bulkheads buckled and burst under the immense sea pressure, surviving intact.

Like this corridor, he considered, on the Last Day.

On that Bank Holiday when New Year's fell on Saturday.

No one bothered to tell Johnny, a mere temporary, so he came to work as usual. He penetrated the building, but no one appeared. He offered himself various explanations. He had been early or they had all been late. There had been a major disruption of public transit, which only himself had miraculously escaped.

With such fustian he rationalized the Apocalypse.

He was a dreamer and not cool....

*****

Johnny folded a white bath towel and tucked it under the feet of the Royal typewriter, in deference to Montrealers, who wouldn't hear it tapping, or at least would hear it less distinctly.

Like an elf in slippers, tap-dancing.

Instead of a fairy, in jackboots.

He thought how barbers applied fresh hot towels to the customer in the chair....

He had seen it done, in movies....

To Albert Anastasia!

Then, at the autopsy, he liked the way the instruments gleamed at the bottom of the white enamel tray, asleep on the bed of a folded, sterilized towel.

It reminded him of the nickel, gleaming around the white celluloid keys of his machine.

A silver-shanked Parker fountain pen glistening against the purple lining of its sheath....

Those docs sure knew how to treat a stiff....

When he was five, one removed his tonsils.

Ma explained the ritual, being wheeled down the tiled corridor by outlandishly gowned strangers, like alien spacemen.

She was fascinated by surgical procedures, physically courageous, and would gladly have married a doctor, if only she could have.
She forgot to tell him about the anesthetic.

It was deadly Zoncolite.

When they covered his face with a cone, like the wooden-handled strainer in the kitchen-drawer, he PUKED....
When the thin doctor in the under-shirt, friend of the family too, sprayed the ether through, it had a sickly-sweet stench, like the inside of an ice-cream cone.

Sorry to do this to you, JOHNNY!

He forgot his name.

He sipped his wine.
Every operation needed an anesthetic.
Someone had to be the patient.
Someone had to be the doctor....

*****

The doctor was a charlatan, a quack. His father was Johnny's mother's pusher! Johnny's mother was his father's junkie!

*****

Through the open window he heard the subdued breathing of Montreal.
The Phthisis Ward....
Got between a nobleman and a nurse.
In the flat downstairs, dishes clattered. In the basement, a dryer ran.
Someone was always doing the laundry.

*****

In Maypole City, after Massive Harvester went bust, the hospital was the biggest employer.
It took things to prepare the food, things to deliver the trays, things to pick them up, things to clean up after.
Things to make the beds, to lie in them, to soil, strip, launder them.

*****

A powerful, powder-blue Lincoln farted in the alley, belched passengers. The laughter of Greek boys in the alley, runners scuffing.
Visiting hour.
He didn't want to think how he knew.
He was in solitary.

*****

The Doctor.
The hospital on his 18th birthday.
Manhood.
The previous summer he had flagged traffic on the highway; the summer before that he had detasseled corn.
The privileges conferred on him by his brother. Riding together in the front seat, eating in the dining room, keeping bad hours, drinking too much beer....
Ended with the (thin, mustachioed, pipe-smoking, gorgeous) Doctor....
Johnny had been intractable, of course, but the Doctor had already divorced an invalided wife, remarried, and been widowed again.

Johnny figured he'd poisoned her....

*****

The English Teacher brought him a book on calligraphy, an honest version of the quackery he got at school, in the MLA's Handbook for Writers of Research Papers.

Noel Noel was a teacher in a school....

*****

But it was the Science Teacher Johnny wanted to fuck.

On a school trip. On the edge of a stump lot, the Dadanian Shield. Dangling their ankles over a nuclear waste dump. Toasting their tootsies.

Mr. Knossos pulling off grizzly Kodiac hiking boots. Rolling heavy gray army socks down hairy calves and feet.

Look at the teacher! Look at the teacher! They chorused. Frisking like kids.

The Science Teacher was a satyr.

*****

Canisters of sugarpills his aunts hoarded years after his doctor uncle's death. Fakers and hoarders!

What better punishment for cheating the natives than his line dwindling to a couple of senile dements, saving his placebos like prayer beads. The young braves went to the ophthalmologist's, where Dorothy read their eyes, for prescriptions. They read her nametag,

The Pill Doctor!

Marion hoarded subway tokens....

*****

He analyzed the Doctor's handwriting, with the English Teacher's handbook. For signs of depression, suicidal tendencies....

Alienism, Phrenology....

*****

That you could be betrayed by writing wasn't news.

In Montreal he saw handsome oak confessionals.

He wanted to confess.

Ink. Was it different from hemlock? If you drank it, you would know.

There probably was led in it, like house-paint.

Deadly Zoncolite.

Painters succumbed to it, poisoned. Got vertigo, and fell. It got on the hands, arms, face. It got in the blood. With only a nib it got on, somewhere

It blotted everything out, with its electric glare.

Icarus & Son, House Painters.

*****

In the afternoon he lay on the unmade bed, in aniline-dyed pajamas, where he fell.

The English Teacher dropped in to see how his calligraphy was going. She was thirty. Her husband was a long-haired hippie school teacher from Hogtown, unemployed in Maypole City. Sometimes the French Teacher came along. Mme Sloboda admired his brother's signature: fat, fluent, phallic.

Johnny was just finishing something he had been saying about a schoolmate, when he saw his brother wince. No, pounce. Thinking of the note he'd left.

Pioneers of Alienation

Dear Butch:

I love your canine odor, but most of all the way you piss and shit on everything artistic. I live for you, die for you.

*****

Taking Ma's Valium. Everything the doctor ordered for the next 6 months. Pills! Prescriptions! Writing! With hemlock after one cutie.

Butch always wanted to be a.... Psychosurgeon, to be exact.

*****

Johnny was Santy.
Elvira gave him a paperback. Town Without Pity (very foxed).
Mrs. Midas gave him an apple.
Do you like it?
Yes, thank you.
I'm so glad. I wanted to get you something really beautiful.
It's nice. I like brass.

Are you looking for something? Elvira asked him, as archly as before.
Yes.
Why, here it is. She gave it to Johnny. Who is it for?
It's for mother, he said. He gave it to their mother.

She removed the tiny bow and the bit of paper that covered the casket.
Elvira, she said, when she saw the pin. It's lovely, she repeated, over and over.
After I got it I asked my boss, what do women like? She said, things that come in little leather boxes. I hope you like it.

I can't tell you how much it means to me. I love you all so much.
She kept squeezing the box, with the garnet jewel..
You're my jewels, she said. Johnny had only been able to think of that Roman lady, whose jewels turned out paste.
Even Victor? Elvira asked. I can't understand what our older brother is doing. Not at all.
He has his family.
It's himself he doesn't have.
Family's his first consideration.
What am I, then?
Yes, Elvira, but....
Why doesn't he talk to me?
Maybe he's afraid.
He's afraid of himself.
Victor?
Of his past, then.
How could that make him afraid of you?
Get up and come with me.
Elvira....
Johnny heard his sister's rapid whisper in the kitchen, between their mother's sobs and protests.
They returned like wraiths in a Greek tragedy, from the wings....
I'm going to bed now, Johnny, Ma announced, sobbing. He remembered his father and his brother, at night in the back yard, pummeling one another. His brother winning.
He waited in the plush armchair by the dying fire. A few moments later Elvira came down, like Ophelia.
I'm afraid I can't have anything more to do with you, Johnny, she said.
Why not?
Because, I'm bad.

He hated Christmas....

Thing Street Asylum

*****

Johnny met Deane at Dadania Ironic where Porko was still only a mail-boy but Trixie had already risen to receptionist.

Deane had fallen off Mount Royal onto his head and forgotten everything he knew, except business administration.

The vice-president's secretary introduced them.

He wanted Deane more than ever.

Johnny was a mail clerk at the Dadania Ironic Company in Hogtown. Deane was a Treasury Department Analyst. They both had B.A.s.

Different programs, identical fucking idiots.

Only, not quite.

Deane's B.A. was in History and Economics from Queen's.

Johnny's was in English Literature from Hogtown's worthless U of Titz.

Deane's M.B.A. was at the prestigious University of the Nineholes of Southwestern Dadania, aka Sowestole.

Johnny's M.A. was supposed to be at the U of Titz too, but the Titz had characteristically lost his application, and postponed him.

Indefinitely.

Everything would still have gone swimmingly, but some Tithead combed Johnny's application with a lice-pick and discovered that he hadn't taken that indispensable Bullshit Through The Ages course, back in '53.

O, who could it have been?

Julius Patrician, Major Domo of the School of Madness and Technology?

Rube Goldberg, Dean of Humanities?

Was it possible?

Max the Butcher, Visiting Professor and Chair of the Department of Criminology and Social Work?

Professor C. Lamprini Eel, pioneering Uncle of Dadanian Psychiatry?

Do I anticipate?

Who? O, who?

That stupid fuck (Johnny) totally forgot how easily things fucked up. On the phone, in the mail room, defending his graduate status to the registrar's secretary, he was learning.

So what if he hadn't studied Shelley's Ode to the West Inn in the same course with The Return of Martin Guerre (trendiest groove that it once was) and Psychopathia Sexualis (those hairy-backed sailors, where were they?).

Grand Vizier Alapaloozah glared out of his slobber-gothic dormer high atop the ninety-story Piece Belfry, and gobbed right on it.

Yes, right on Johnny Boy's ejacation.

Crap, lost among all the turds on the Pottawatomie. A log-jam....

Mister Boy! If you please! You're talking about the premier sinister of Dadania!

No, Johnny screamed into the shiny-black post-war receiver. Father Harry Boyfuck! Bishop Hanke Panky! One of them snitched on him. Ruined his ejacation! His! Johnny Boy's!

Mister Boy, we were discussing that great romantic lyricist and pioneering social visionary, Percey Bysshe Shelley

A commie faggit! You wanna talk about a commie faggit when my ejacation's in jeopardy!

I'd shove the fucker in a thorn bush!

*****

Johnny had just finished quarreling with the chairman's secretary, Dragon Lady Leblanc. The Dragon was enraged, because Johnny always delivered the mail according to the physical layout of the office, which made her last. She wanted it first.

Getting the mail five minutes ahead of everyone else meant the world, to the Dragon. So she went around the office, asking everybody if they'd noticed Johnny's speech impediment. His concurrent disability.

Come to think of it, he was a little retarded.

*****

He wanted Deane the next time they shook hands. To fuck him, more than ever. Jerk-off between those long, lanky calves.

Deane was tall and slim, with a slight paunch and thinning hair. His yellow-tinted aviator sun-glasses matched his teeth, but he had a nice smile....

Full, sensous lips....

Dragon Lady Leblanc had been his father's secretary. She'd been in love with Deane's father. She said he never got enough....

Rest....

She wanted to fuck him, too....

*****

They were discussing George Grant's Lament for a Nation. Deane knew he'd read it, he just couldn't remember anything about it.....

Funny....

Johnny said it was about how superior they were to Americans.

O! Deane observed how much more relaxed their young sports were at football, the national destiny in terms of different styles of scrimmage....

Of queens....

At Queen's....

He lazily scratched his buttocks as he rose to get his morning coffee, politely thanking him for the conversation.

Johnny wanted to fuck him....

*****

There was no possibility of their even doing lunch.

Deane accompanied the phlegmatic Bruce, his office-mate, to eat pizza at marble-topped tables in an indoor courtyard with a miniature Niagara Falls. Loiterers were hurried away by an officious little maitre d', the moment they stopped chewing.

Johnny ate with Porko, who was still only a mail-boy although he was middle-aged, even, as he said himself, at the north end of middle age.

Porko knew more than they did, but that didn't stop Johnny from wanting to join his young friends and fuck one of them. Both!

Sometimes they passed in opposite directions, Porko and Johnny arguing, Deane and Bruce observing.

Porko said it made him feel like Norma with Polione, when Adagisa passed by.

At the end of the summer Johnny boldly invited Deane to dinner, because they were students.

They had so much catching up to do....

Bruce invited himself. Their chaperon.

*****

Deane joked about the time he was traveling in Greece and he and his friends accidentally entered a gay bar.

The proprietor wasn't gay, but he took a shine (?) to them, hairy Dadanian lumberjacks that they were, with a week's growth of beard.

Jaws like stump-lots....

He bought them rounds of brandy, man to man. He was the only one who wasn't gay....

Besides themselves, of course....

*****

When Johnny told Porko, he scoffed.

Who'd suggested going to a gay bar, in the first place?

One of them was a fag....

Was it, Deane?

The proprietor took a shine to them?

Didn't that mean he was attracted?

Maybe it was the other way around. Maybe the proprietor was the only one who was gay, besides themselves of course!

He would have turned the table on them.

Like it takes one to know one, etc.

Deane and Bruce were ass-holes.

*****

Johnny never told Porko how one evening he boarded a subway car with Deane and Bruce.

Deane sat opposite him while he told him about a poem he was having published. Deane offered to give him his address so he could send him a copy, but begged him not to send him any randy lines.

Bruce giggled.

*****

At their big symposium, while Bruce pissed in the urinal, visible from their cluttered table, Deane explained how Johnny and himself were really the same.

He was discussing summer vacation with Bruce, building silos and crop-dusting....

In Alberta....

Great long things. He made elastic gestures....

They shared a room. Erect beside him, Bruce wrote letters to Deane's mother, and read them aloud.

He described how Deane's shoulders were getting like Cassius Clay's.

Deane said that if they took their shirts off, his and Johnny's shoulders would be the same. Except for the hair color of course. He was dark. Johnny was fair.

Before, Deane hadn't wanted to loosen his tie.

Now he was saying, they had the same tits.

When Bruce returned they grew distant. Deane remarked of his silo-building days, that the body could take a lot, an awful lot....

Yes, Johnny thought.

Wanting to fuck him, up the ass....

*****

Deane's letter. Johnny saved the envelope. He saved the stamp.

It was an airplane....

A Cessna....

Soaring through antique stores, and crummy haberdasheries, into a cloacal sunset....

He filed it away, in a red folder along with quarterly reports, older and duller than the ones he sent Deane.

There was a Xeroxed page from 1958, two years after they were born. There was Deane's father, severe but handsome, his son's full, sensuous lips....

Father to the man, Johnny thought, their lover....

There was a larger picture on the same page, the mighty thirty-ton counterweight turbines, for the Valleyfield Bridge, on the St. Lawrence Seaway....

Johnny only had to buy something that came by water, or walk down and look at the river, and think about it flowing around Montreal, to feel united with Deane, and his father. And his father's father....

He had a powerful imagination....

When something struck it the right way, the wheels turned, however slowly, at first, then faster, overcoming the inertia....

He began to keep a small, private library of quarterly reports.

He could fuck, by reading old quarterly reports. A first, for corporate pornography....

To the irritation of Porko, who would find him rifling public relations files, instead of delivering the mail.

If they'd wanted someone to file, they'd have hired a woman....

*****

He Xeroxed the Annual Report for 1956, and mailed it to Deane.

The year they were born....

Pioneers of Alienation

*****

Deane hated Christmas, but he'd promised to see him, in that letter whose stamp Johnny admired so much....

That showed an airplane....

A Cessna!

They met on Thing Street....

Deane knew the area. All last summer they'd lived only a few blocks apart. Johnny tried to remember if he'd seen him, and not recognized him....

He tried to remember all the lanky dark-haired men he'd noticed, strolling along Thing Street, in short-shorts and sandals. There were too many....

He knew Deane wore sandals all summer. Long narrow feet. Lanky calves with a fine black pelt. Surely, he'd have remembered....

Before visiting the tavern last August they went to a restaurant on Thing Street where Deane explained to him and Bruce how he and his cronies at Queens dressed up for Halloween in women's clothing from the Salvation Army....

Johnny winced, because he bought his drag from the same place.....

After they were all dressed-up, they dined at the best restaurant in Thingstown, at the expense of somebody's father....

They were rude, and flicked ashes on the floor and stubbed out their cigarettes on one another's ill-clad shoulders.

Deane ground his thumb into Johnny's then, for emphasis....

Previously the topics of their conversation had ranged from Deane's father to Dadanian/American differences, now they drifted from university cronies, to ashes on the floor, to footwear.

With more elastic gestures, Deane demonstrated how his summer sandals conformed to the shape of his beautiful foot....

Then Johnny remembered Deane's explaining at length to Trixie, that slut, how all the men in his family suffered from hang-nails.

Their manly trait.

No, he couldn't remember anyone like him. Johnny had given him his address, but doubted he would come.

Then, the front door rang, and he admitted Deane's tall figure, stooped with the heavy knapsack, which he immediately deposited on the bed in the downstairs hall. Thinking it was theirs, perhaps....

Deane regarded the leaded windows, the plants on the landing. What a nice place. Thinking it was theirs. Not just a room....

Johnny led the way, up the dark-varnished stairs....

*****

Deane hid it at first, but after a few beers he confessed, he lived in a room. Which after another beer shrank to half a room. With a room-mate....

Johnny got jealous.

Was it the same man he built silos with, and dusted crops? Who wrote letters to his mother, about her son's beautiful shoulders?

More beers, and Deane began to talk about school. How they'd all been required to take a Sex Education course. The teacher told them that MBAs were moral imbeciles. Ass-holes!

Johnny believed it.

By then Deane had pealed off his blue sweater and the checked shirt underneath it, over smooth shoulders, sparsely haired....

He was staying at his brother's. Their little girl liked to jump on him. Enjoyed landing on something soft....

He yawned and scratched. He hadn't slept much last night. The little girl woke him up early, bouncing up and down....

Wondering what time it was, he dug a round wrist-watch with a broken band out of his jeans.

Johnny said he should get a leather strap somewhere, not one of those expansion bracelets.

Deane agreed. Hard on the hairs.

Johnny went into the (shared) kitchen to get some more beer.

A Japanese writer rented the large front room. He worked for the loco Handy Haven. Fast-food, and haikus....

He would return in the morning and prepare a traditional Japanese meal. Sometimes he left Johnny angry lists of things he should have thrown out of their fridge: cheese, bread, a bottle of wine.

Then he would TYPE....

Deane was sitting on Johnny's green antimacasar....

He'd jerked off on it, countless times.

Deane didn't know, he was sitting on a young life's worth of cum....

He would have got off on it....

On the arm was a copy of the Life and Times of Oscar Wilde....

Very foxed....

Deane stretched his long legs and regarded his shoes as he turned his ankle now this way, now that...

They were the kind of shoes he'd always wanted....

All-purpose....

Steel-reinforced toes....

You could wear them safely on a construction site, then to some punky bar....

He handed Deane another beer, wondering where they were. Ah yes, fathers....

Johnny sat in an armchair in front of a chest of drawers with a mirror on top. It was quarter-sawn oak....

Deane regarded the bed, the oak library table, the chest of drawers with its (almost) perfect mirror. Art deco, wasn't it?

Johnny showed him a book of drawings. Deane thumbed the flat, pale volume in his lap. He studied a drawing of a fat, florid man who appeared to be tied to his ash-plant like a balloon.

Oscar Wilde!

He tried to return the volume to the table but it wouldn't lie down. He removed something that scraped under it, a pair of gold cuff-links, which he shook in his hand like dice.

He peaked and, noticing the insignia, asked if Johnny had ever been in the army.

Johnny laughed. They were his father's. Deane cast them on the flat, pale volume.

Johnny explained that his father had tried and tried to get into the army, but kept getting rejected. He had flat feet, bad vision. Furtive glances at Deane's large feet, his aviator glasses....

By the time the Army had accepted Johnny's father the war was over, so he'd enjoyed himself in England, Holland, France, Germany. He'd returned, to confront an estranged wife and a sissy. Victor, he meant....

He had a daughter too, but she posed no worry along those lines. No one worried about her, becoming a dyke....

Johnny was accidental. A train wreck....

Deane smiled, but Johnny was watching the back of his head in the mirror on the closet door....

Smoke rising over upturned wheels, revolving...

Deane explained how his father got sick on a fishing trip up north, and came home limping. His wife made him go to the doctor. The Doctor discovered a cancer, too late....

Deane was at a private boys' school. The head master summoned him from gym. Still sweating, in (dirty) short-shorts....

He told him. His father was dying....

He sipped his cold beer.

Johnny savored his vision of the adolescent Deane. Geeky. The temples of his glasses taped.

Deane said that when he saw him, his father was drugged. He didn't recognize him....

Deane remembered how when they went to the cottage, his father always visited a man in a Thing Store, while he waited with his mother in the car....

There was something queer about him...

At least when his father returned, he was laughing for a change....

That was special between them. He never told anyone else. Remember!

They were already where Lytton Strachey would have inculcated himself....

*****

Deane had written him, in that letter with the Cessna, in his strong, sloppy hand, about the propositions he was getting form banks and investment houses, and what a lot of beer they swilled, at that stag, last night....

He had an interview tomorrow at eleven. He dug into his pocket for the watch with the broken band, and asked if it was supper-time.

It was. But they had to have a glass of wine first. Johnny had worked that fall as a night clerk in a small hotel. The manager was a middle-aged Italian gentleman who had managed hotels in South America. His father had been Governor of Vatican City. Mr. Lugari explained that a portion of their property lay right over the catacombs. Johnny didn't believe him till one night he showed him some Roman coins and an old dagger. He unfolded an old map which indicated the Villa Lugari.

For Christmas, Mr. Lugari gave him a bottle of good Italian wine.

Johnny poured the wine into two Worthless World glasses and set them before Oscar Wilde, a libation.

Deane said it was nice. A few days ago he'd spent the night with a friend, in his father's wine cellar. They had terrific headaches next morning....

Gee, but those M.B.A.s had some swell times though....

Those queens!

At Queens!

They finished their bottle. Johnny watched as Deane set his glass on the table, empty except for one last drop. Like a sample on a slide. Johnny never used it again. He didn't wash it. He stored it under his bed till he broke it one night, looking for an Annual Report....

Sorry to do this to you, JOHNNY!

Deane scanned the spines of his books, while pulling on his socks. A set of Balzac leaned in all directions because the plank underneath was so badly warped. Deane removed a white paperback copy of Steppenwolf. He smiled and replaced the Coles bag in his knapsack.

Johnny suggested that he leave the knapsack there. He could come back and get it after, he said hopefully. Deane said it was all right. And left it in the hall a moment while he went to wash the cum off his hands. He left the washroom door open while he splashed some water on his chest. Johnny told him to dry himself with the green towel. He watched while Deane carefully combed his hair in the mirror labeled with the landlord's meticulous request to always wash the tub with cleanser under the sink when through showering.

He handed him his shirt....

*****

The weather turned cold. The sky was clear, but the stars were invisible over the street lights. There were patches of ice. Not every household had cleared its portion of sidewalk. Deane slipped in his all-purpose shoes, and Johnny reached out to hold him.

He felt a little embarrassed.

Deane slipped again, almost immediately, and Johnny embraced him this time.

Deane shivered. He said it was cold.,..

The restaurant had been converted to a coffee-shop for students. The men wore open-necked plaid shirts and sat at wooden tables under the loose tendrils of hanging plants. It was a terrarium, illuminated by giant gro-lights. Maybe it made their hairs grow....

They crossed the street to a Swiss restaurant where every evening the proprietor played the same Edith Piaf record, over and over....

Deane ordered steak. Johnny had schnitzel. They ordered coffee. Deane tasted his, and said it was stale.

They talked. Johnny admitted that he was getting impatient with writing.

Deane flicked his glasses, and sent them sliding down his nose; Johnny realized, he was looking over his own glasses.

He'd always expected to be some kind of genius, but it was taking too long....

Deane stared at him a moment.

All right, maybe he was a fucking idiot!

Deane said he'd lost his delusions of grandeur.

They rose to go. They had to put on their coats before the proprietor, who was turning over his Piaf record, brought them their bill.

Johnny asked Deane if he'd like to come back to his room, but he said no. If he did, he'd would be tempted to drink some more beer, and he had to make that appointment at eleven tomorrow.

Otherwise, he'd have been glad to spend the night. The evening, he quickly corrected himself.

Johnny said they could go east or west on Thing Street. They were exactly half-way between Vagina and Badhearse. Deane reminded him, he'd lived in the neighborhood long before they were, ugh, acquainted.

He wouldn't say, before they were friends....

They passed Hangover House, raucous music pouring onto Thing Street from the second-story dormers. Bucks in jeans and leather shivered on the stoop, before skulking off.

Over-dressed show boys, who could afford the cover, lined up for the show girls.

*****

Johnny offered to carry Deane's bag to the station, but he wouldn't let him. He said he was used to carrying his own stash. He was from Montreal. Remember?

Before passing through the turnstile Deane told him his brother's name was in the phone book, if he wanted to reach him. Deane inserted a crisp dollar into the machine. It took it. A numeral flashed in the little window. He pressed the button, and the token clattered into the cup. He scooped it out with long fingers, and strode to the metal turnstile, where he inserted it.

The machinery clicked, pausing for him to press the bar with his thigh.

Johnny reached up and pressed his shoulder, his second overt gesture that evening. Deane was always doing it to him, but now he looked annoyed.

Keep in touch, he said.
He was trying....

*****

That summer Porko made Johnny sit down and compose, on a Selectric typewriter at a vacant desk.
Johnny liked to rest his fingers on the home keys, while he contemplated some randy lines for Deane....
He could have slept on the nickel and celluloid keyboard of his old ROYAL, without moving the keys. They were so stiff....
Something always happened to spoil his copy. The carriage bleated electronically and ran off with his Pastorals to Corydon....
Porko completed one circuit of Dadania Ironic, delivering mail that should have been delivered that morning, filling his arms with mail from a dozen out trays, already late....
Johnny had only finished his first strophe, which he pronounced strove. Porko passed by again with his arms ostentatiously full, and ordered him to follow him, into their sanctuary, behind the photo-copiers....

*****

Summer became fall last night.
Drinking and talking and summer heat
drinking in the quiet room slowly
crowding and loudening round the cold
white tables while the sky brightens
a long moment and stains mauve
the whole evening lengthening into one
sustained moment nostalgic for summer.

We said we are not as we were
two year ago. We said we wouldn't
have known each other a year ago
but knew and felt we knew we weren't
even as we were seconds ago
and we still didn't know each other.

But summer became fall last night
Passion torpid and torpor cold.
Ripeness became over-ripe
and growing became harvest season.

We felt it late for criticism
but ripe for recollection and spoke
of summers past, of afternoons
that loitered under unkempt willows
of mornings that lay beside the stream
and the shepherd who knew us of those days.

*****

He worked with Porko all summer.

*****

They got promotional material addressed to Deane.
Porko smiled when he handed him the envelope, a special subscription offer from Forbes or The Economist.
No Cessna, silhouetted against the sky.
A tall, shuffling man penetrated their sanctum behind the photo-copiers. He looked like his body had come undone. His secretary was a scrawny, stick woman who cut her own hair. She sometimes came back, to talk to them.

One day she told them her husband was an illiterate teamster whom she'd married out of pity. It was their daughter she loved. She said her boss was falling apart. He'd already fallen twice this year, twisting an ankle and wrenching his knee. He was away a lot. He arrived late, and left early. Even the other secretaries had noticed. She wondered whose secretary she'd be, after he got fired. She was worried about her daughter.

Now the tall, shuffling man fretted as he scanned the row of boxes for his mail. He had expected an important registered letter that morning. It was after lunch.

Porko smiled pleasantly as, with hectic flushes, he explained to the dough-faced man that he had just made the rounds of the office, so maybe it had already been delivered.

Maybe? The man whined that registered mail delivered that morning ought to be on his desk that morning, and skulked off.

Porko scoffed that it was probably something to do with matches. The man spent all his time sequestered in his office, with large-bellied salesmen, with fat sample-cases....

Johnny knew he was involved with the Annual Reports, because his secretary had custody of the back-issues, including very old numbers which had information about Deane's father.

Must have been Communications....

She let him borrow them and make copies, which he mailed to Deane at company expense.

*****

Usually Porko and Johnny escaped at noon for lunch in a greasy spoon on Kunt Street. They never ordered more than a beer and french-fries between them, but they occupied the uncomfortable red vinyl-upholstered booth too long for the haggard, uniformed waitress. She wanted to replace them with a fat, big-tipping businessfuck....

She had glittering tear-shaped glasses inlaid with what appeared to be bits of human bone....

They would talk outrageously, till they caught a handsome, young businessfuck following their discussion from the next booth.

They really laid it on. They liked to perform, before a live one....

*****

When Porko was out Johnny had lunch with Bruce from Treasury in the mailroom. Bruce ate out of a brown paper bag, or sometimes had the free soup from the vending machine. He slouched in the armchair beside Johnny's desk, and stretched his short legs as far as he could.

Johnny offered him half of his sandwich, but he said he was dieting. He ran his fingers through his long, blond hair.

The receptionist came by with a personal letter, which Johnny offered to run through their Pitney-Bowes machine, for free. She rejected his offer. That was stealing!

Everyone considered her a piece of Victoriana, bric-a-brac.

She was rumored to have married a wealthy Polish diplomat, a concert pianist. Said to have died in a nocturne....

Hard!

Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre....

Johnny never let on. A Countessa?

She never let on either, but she was rumored to be well-connected. She had Porko and Johnny in her condo, to see her late husband's slides.

She never had anyone singly. At least they wouldn't die in the middle of a nocturne, or even a mazurka.

She used a scratchy vinyl recording of The Pines of Rome as accompaniment. Then Johnny put on Le Sacre du Printemps....

He'd noticed it, on her cradenza. An autographed photo of Alapalozah, Grand Vizier of Dadania....

Bruce watched her go. He said she'd probably make a bad enemy.

Johnny said, for sure.

He teased Johnny about school. What opportunities he had, for girls! At parties he and his friends hid their tequila from everyone else, as a treat just for themselves.

They were life-guards. Bruce plucked at the fold of flesh under his white shirt, like it was something new. They'd been fit!

They worked out, then they jogged for miles; finally, they lay own in the shower, on their backs, the hard spray arousing their cocks as they described their....

Opportunites....

Thing Street Asylum

*****

Bruce wore battered loafers. On St. Patrick's Day he carried green argyle socks to work in his brief-case and changed into them for a party with cronies from Wood-Gundy.

In the washroom he danced a jig, hitching grey flannel trousers up over green argyle-clad ankles....

They weren't crazy....

Like Deane's....

*****

Bruce said he'd heard Deane was working out west.

Johnny said he knew. They corresponded, regularly.

Bruce said he was surprised Deane wrote back, meaning nothing personal. Deane hadn't impressed him as the kind that wrote letters. He' d impressed him as the kind that drank beer.

He added, as if he thought he might have been a little harsh, that he was certainly a hard worker, though. He'd resented him last summer, because Deane only wore vicuna jackets. Deane's mother bought them for him.

Mornings Deane would relate how he'd gone to some fashionable men's shop at Draine and Spore (the best district), where an obsequious counterjumper (with a lady-killer mustache) showed him two coats.

Take the vicuna, he said. Since the lady's paying.

Bruce bought his suits off the rack, at Jascha's Haberdashery.

Porko blasted the Pitney-Bowes machine, stamping and sealing the letters he'd neglected to mail all morning, making further conversation impossible....

Johnny said nothing, about the drag....

Maybe she bought that for him, too....

She lived in a condo, in a wasteland, under a rainbow-colored Zoncolite sign....

Maybe there was gold under it, too.

*****

He rented a bachelor apartment in a house on Thing Street owned by an Eastern Block couple. They'd been his landlords on Hangover.

They had several Houses, including the largest on Thing Street, his landlady was fond of repeating, which they shared with an assortment of young lawyers, drifters, old men, and occupational wanderers like Johnny, whom they adopted, or immediately evicted.

Not everyone suited. There was no hot water if one bathed at the same time as anyone else, no Hydro if one used an appliance when anyone else did, etc., but every Christmas the landlady brought him a generous sample of her Christmas baking, on a paper plate covered with a bright paper napkin.

Johnny started to keep large quantities of beer about, because he expected a visit from Deane, at any moment. The alky....

Deane was late, since he'd promised to see him at 3 p.m. on May 3rd....

Johnny brought cases of beer home every night, sweating and almost fainting under the strain.

The beer hadn't magically effected the presence of his friend.

*****

Johnny sat at his desk, an unfinished page on the stationary carriage of his Royal, and slowly pealed the label off a brew, a sullen and inebriated Aladdin.

*****

Butch rose unsteadily from the captain's chair and, with his hands stuffed into his trousers pockets and his flannel-trousered knees uncomfortably pressed against the radiator, looked north, where the buildings dwindled away.

From the sixtieth floor of his travertine tower, he distinguished other tall buildings, like toys....

He imagined, flying through them....

Pioneers of Alienation

On the roof of The Hotel, businessfucks endlessly circled, in short-shorts....
Butch needed his help....

A fat set of originals lay in a green transparent portfolio on his blotter. He had to correct them, reproduce them on the Xerox, stack them, collate the stacks and package them with their respective introductory letters for each of the seventeen corporate divisions.

He watched the runners' insect motion, thinking of the pool, wishing he were there....

He turned to his desk and removed the first typed sheet. The Controller had written on it, in angry red pencil, Center Heading!

Butch squinted and saw that, yes, indeed, the heading was perhaps one millimeter askew. He bore it superciliously before him, pinched like a bug between the fingers of his left hand, and inserted it in his secretary, Trixie's machine. He tried to align it with the type, tested it, but found it was still slightly askew. He removed the paper, erased the heading, and inserted it again.

Before testing it a third time, he sat still, resting his chin on his hand, listening to the electric drone of the machinery. He heard footsteps....

Johnny?

You're working late, Butch. Won't your secretary do that? asked Johnny.

Butch removed his pince-nez and combed his shit-blond hair with his fingers. He reclined in the captain's chair. He still had broad shoulders, Johnny noticed, even if he was getting a gut.

Butch placed his hands behind his neck and stretched, squinting a little without his spectacles. The pits of his dress-shirt were dark....

Trixie only stays till 5 each night. Rain or shine....

Working late doesn't leave you much personal time, sir.

No, it doesn't, he said, looking up. Johnny realized. He had a nice smile....

*****

The least I can do is give you a lift, he said. Refastening his tie....

After I do another round, just for appearances....

Then we'll leave. Together!

Johnny walked around the office toward the mail-room, checking the out-baskets one last time. His supervisor, Helen, had left a yellow divisional envelope. He retrieved it. From the cabinet under the Pitney-Bowes machine in the mail-room he removed a large green polyethylene bag and attached it to the trash bin in the corner for the cleaning staff that came around 6:30 P.M. They even washed the tea-cups those sluts, Trixie and Alethia, always left in the sink. He carried the yellow divisional envelope into the reception area and taped it to another envelope on the desk, for the dispatcher.

Butch centered some more headings at Trixie's machine, for appearances....

Balance was everything.

Yes, said Johnny. Corporations, he began, swiftly glancing from one end of the empty corridor to the other and meaningfully pausing to leave no doubt that he did not exempt Dadania Ironic from what he was about to say, have tried so hard to eliminate ALIENATION from the work-place that the middle-management man now identifies too much with the corporation. When something goes wrong at work, he feels totally lost!

Totally, agreed Butch. I hope you consider that yourself (and blow it out your ass, stupid fag). Other places besides Dadania Ironic hire students like you, Johnny.

I know, Johnny said. Like Johnny, but not Johnny.

After all, you're not going to be my mail-boy for ever.

I hope not, said Johnny. Only, he was....

He removed his jacket from the hook behind the door, and retrieved his retractable umbrella from the credenza. He strode with it, into the Men's Room. and emerged momentarily, looking refreshed, twirling it in the lobby.

Ready?

Ready. He held the door for the older man and set the lock. It snappe shut behind them, while they awaited the elevator in the hall.

I like to exercise, said Butch, going down in the machine. I run and swim. About a week ago I got so hot fixing a door at home that I drove all the way downtown to go swimming at the Hotel. But the water was so warm from all the bodies, I couldn't stand it.

How awful.

Later I found out it was 98 degrees. Body heat, said Butch.

I don't run on pavement, he added, as they reached the sidewalk. You do yourself tremendous harm that way.

I guess it's hard to find good exercise, Johnny observed. That didn't make you go blind....

Yes. There's nothing you can do about it. Your body decays. My stomach muscles have already gone, he confided. Johnny had already noticed....

They paused as Johnny regarded the subway entrance on University. This is where I get on, said Johnny.

I'll drive you home, said Butch.

They parked outside Johnny's place, just past the porno palace.

He removed his right hand from his jacket pocket where he'd been rattling some coins, and shook Johnny's hand.

*****

At the meridian of the fiscal period
alerted by such commerce with surroundings
you may retrieve one detail of the myriad
one in the context totally astounding.

Like someone being cautioned by the traffic
to look for danger where there isn't any
who in the downward quest for something graphic
discovers he possesses just one penny.

This country that was promised in a vision
and from the vantage of these towers visible
upholds its flatterers to the derision
the realization sadder the more risible.

*****

Johnny arrived late for the appointment because he'd been writing poetry again. Butch took him immediately, in the empty room the auditors used.

Johnny was bitterly disappointed when afterwards he sat him behind a large bare table and presented him with a copy of the graph he used to collate his papers. The Testament.

There were the seventeen divisions of Dadania Ironic, Foundry, Pipe, Plastics, etc., listed beside their due quantities of forms. He started to count and stack them crosswise so they could be separated later.

Twice Butch returned and ordered Johnny to scrap several already-collated documents which had just been revised, although the revisions consisted only of window-dressing, to suit the taste of the Vice-President of Finance or the President of Operations. A line to be centered, a box to be squared.

O.K., make 65 copies of each of these supplementary forms.

*****

Studying English? Butch queried. The button lit at the sudden warmth of his touch. Immediately an elevator rang to descend.

Johnny nodded. It was the code.

I had a friend who was studying English. At Father Ambrosio's Boytown Collegiate. We've been out of touch....

Oh, sad....

I think it's time we got together again.

Yeah, sure. After all, Deane was late....

It's good to know men of different.... persuasions....

Giving a lesson one afternoon....

*****

Early Saturday morning Johnny showed his introductory letter with the Controller's stylized signature to the guard at the security desk in the basement of the travertine tower.

Do you want some I.D.?

Thats enough, he barked, and took the letter. Sixtieth floor? He phoned for clearance.

Pioneers of Alienation

Johnny admitted himself with his key, deliberately walked past the Controller's desk and loudly said Good morning! Then he took the forms Butch had laid aside and began to reproduce them. He had already done about 10 when Butch arrived in casual blue cotton slacks and a red T-shirt open at the throat, revealing a few gray hairs. The tight red shirt accentuated the broad shoulders, and the slackening stomach muscles too.

Then Trixie arrived. She would center something,omitting half of it. Then she would pile the forms to be collated and knock them over, the pages skimming across the dusty boardroom floor while the Controller watched, frowning.

What have you done with those forms Johnny typed? asked Butch.

Johnny typed? I typed them, she protested, indignantly.

No, he corrected her. Johnny typed in the amounts.

That's nothing!

Mr. Hamilton sat at the head of the boardroom table with Johnny and Butch at either corner, and Trixie flitting somewhere between. Mr. Hamilton scrutinized each page of the procedure before it was packaged to be sent to the divisional managers. Suddenly he saw a form that had been sloppily reproduced.

This can never be sent, he said. Then he checked a second copy, which was the same. What if they're all this way, he whined. All the boxes, crooked!

I'll fix it, said Butch, and he glanced sharply at Johnny, who hung his head contritely. Johnny followed Butch into the xerox room.

I'm so embarrassed, Johnny apologized.

Don't worry, Butch soothed him. Trixie did this one.

I value my personal time, observed Butch, as he gobbled his burger.

Yes, it's good to stay balanced, Johnny agreed. Would you like some French-fries?

No, they bloat me, he refused. But those look stone cold, he fretted. Here, warm them up in the oven. And he rose and rummaged in the stove drawer and found a small pot which he filled with Johnny's fries and placed in the oven, on low.

I haven't much time, said Johnny.

Take a few moments, said Butch, expansively. I have to see a man about a dog. He excused himself.

I think it has tiles in the bathroom. But then I can't remember for sure. You know those little tiles? Instead of linoleum, explained Trixie, riding home in Butch's car.

A condominium's a big commitment, agreed Butch. But it's better than renting.

I know. I promised myself. My next move would be into my own home. It's Incredibly better, she enthused. They'll let me keep my cat!

Oh, perfect then.

Johnny said nothing.

Now where should I let you out? asked Butch.

The same place as last night, thought Johnny.

Instead he said, On the street between the last corner and the theater straight ahead.

That theater! guffawed Trixie. You go there? A porno house!

Butch scowled.

I would have gone right past, he said.

*****

So the budget's done, said Porko in the mailroom.

Yes. It's done.

At least you made some money.

Yes, I made some money.

Now you can get Cosi Fan Tutte, Porko observed. By the way, Butch left a card here to be made up, for his wife's business. Why don't you take it to the printers for him?

His wife's? He picked up the little card with Butch's penciled emendations. I'll be back, he said, and strode out the door.

They are like that, too....

*****

Thing Street Asylum

It had been quiet, in the house with the Eastern Block couple. Through his bedroom window, behind the Royal, he watched as youths dropped their bikes, removed their T-shirts, and sunned their pale shoulders in the green-space.

His bedroom was above a den that was unused except when the landlady's mother stayed over. When the landlords were away at in New Jersey, and Johnny had to water their plants, he'd look in at the portrait of the heavily whiskered hero in the gilt frame draped with the brown and white sash.

The plants to be watered were in the living-room, under the large window, aqua-tinted and warped after the foundation settled, the crack in its lintel visible from the street....

He could imagine Communists, plotting uprisings from the sofas arranged against the walls. Very East European.

The araucaria grew so big, the landlady sold it to a Spore Street dive. He wanted to visit it, like Harry Haller.

When he blew a fuse, and they were away, he'd descend into the basement.

She never threw anything away, or let anyone else. Stoves that wouldn't warm, fridges that wouldn't cool. It all germinated on her lawn in the spring, to his mortification.

He'd recognize a shirt, never so crisp and freshly ironed, when it was his.

There were filing-cabinets full of curtains, dresses that she'd tied up in cellophane bags, saved.

The only thing of his she ever rejected was a box of old manuscripts....

She didn't appreciate ART....

But there were radios with nothing behind their rainbow-colored band-spreads but webs of copper wiring and sockets of broken tubes, like bad teeth....

Edison AMBEROLS, in perfect mint condition....

*****

He walked home from Vagina Station after work at Dadania Ironic, and passed young chicken enjoying vegetarian suppers in the expensive new cafes competing with the traditional Hungarian dives along the Spore Street strip.

He preferred the one where the proprietor was a retired soccer player, who always leaned in short-shorts behind the cash, against a background of flags fluttering in a Hydro breeze.

The music ranged from Dietrich to The Beatles, but seemed stuck at Piaf.

There was the landlady's plant. He didn't recognize it.

Marek Finkelburgher patronized the former fastfood restaurant with the advertisement for fresh chicken still in the window. Johnny and Deane passed it that night, full of students in open-necked plaid shirts.

That spring, when his landlady was embarrassing him with his old shirts, a new joint opened on the corner. It had marble-topped tables, big slowly revolving ceiling fans....

Marek's latest haunt....

He saluted him from one of the tables....

He affected the mustache, the round spectacles, and tweedy jacket of the anglophile Austrian, Walter Benjamin. He had a young man with him, pale and Germanic.

Fritz Lang!

Johnny waved, but kept going.

They thought they were in Vienna....

He'd just inserted a fresh sheet of paper in the Royal, and was gazing out the rear window at the green space, where another young man sprawled with his hands behind his head, pits like birds' nests, his bike gleaming beside him on the grass, like discarded armor, when the electric bell rang....

Fuck! Johnny went downstairs, and opened the outer door.

Marek stuck his hand through the crack. Johnny shook it as offered, ceremoniously. Marek explained that most of his friends had already given up on him, but he'd decided to make one final, supreme effort.

Johnny smiled gratefully, and invited him in. He'd come that far....

Marek flung himself into the most comfortable chair, remarking what a full room it was. He wanted reassurance that the records overhead wouldn't start toppling on his head, like a black vinyl cataract.

There was someone he wanted him to meet, but not now.

Johnny supposed he meant the young man he'd seen with him at the café, pale and Germanic....

*****

Marek flung himself onto the sofa, quoting Milton (Hughes ed.): High on a Throne of royal State, which far outshone the Wealth of Ormus and of...

Pioneers of Alienation

He stumbled. Could he see Johnny's Paradise Lost (Hughes ed.)? He read rapidly sotto voce for a few moments. He ceased the swaying motion that seemed to have unconsciously taken hold of him, shut the book loudly like someone applauding, and glanced slyly about, like a tricky communicant.

Ind, he said....

Johnny wondered if what he liked about the Hughes edition was its hard cover, which made a louder clap than a paperback.

His devotions over, he gazed again at the records which filled every tier of the shelf behind him, and had even colonized the bed. He grimaced.

He repeated, what a full room it was, without specifying of what. He was in it....

He saw on top of a dilapidated wardrobe just inside the kitchen, a circa 1920 radio with a gracefully scrolled speaker grill, and two eloctrodes, for a Hydro that no longer existed....

Marek said Johnny shared W. H. Auden's fascination with machines that didn't work.

Johnny hated comparison to that FAG. He objected that most of his machines worked, if only he could find the right kind of power....

He indicated his Royal. With the label of the Unification Typewriter Company (of Beijing). It was older than the century, but everything worked, like clockwork. Was clockwork....

The ribbon automatically reversed itself at the end of the spool; it never got caught, or went out of line.

Marek agreed, it was a beautiful machine.

For confirmation he propped his Dix-clad feet on the desk beside it, then directly on Johnny's knee. His idea of a beautiful machine, perhaps.

Only it didn't work....

Johnny told him to use the desk, the PERVERT....

He should at least have admired the shoes. Marek disguised his disappointment by feigning renewed interest in Hughes/Milton. Squashing th'ascending pile.

Marek approached the metal shelf, and battled the adjacent books, making room for Milton. With unctuous civility he asked to examine Johnny's collection, now he was up.

Johnny said of course, but Marek already had Christianity: For the Tough-Minded. He pronounced it like Etta James, Tuff Lover.

He said he had to go, but promised to return, with that fellow, you know, the clean-shaven one.

He was still angry. Going out the door he noticed some untidy papers on the kitchen table (which Johnny had omitted to cover). The Testament!

Among them, the masthead of a small Dadanian publisher on what he (gleefully) recognized was a rejection slip.

Good news?

*****

Johnny was tired after sorting the mail. An unexpected visitor had kept him up late. Porko demanded to know who it was.

Marek Finkelburgher.

Her? Porko hissed. She obviously thought she could drop in any time she liked.

Especially after everything else had closed.....

*****

Marek told him about the poet's disease. One Saturday afternoon in the Spore Street dive with his landlady's araucaria, where the proprietor wore leiderhosen behind the cash register and played Piaf records, La Vie en Rose and Milord, all day long.

Over the cordon bleu, he began a detailed analysis of anxiety of influence, with the understanding that Johnny had it bad.

Waiter! Two of the same!

In Dadania, neglect was the poets' condition. They ended bitter, attacking the only things who ever read them. Marek admitted. He himself was occasionally afflicted, but now he had insight, a cure was imminent....

Last night he slept with that nice young editor of the U of Titz Bullletin. Johnny introduced them, at one of Bach's Passions. He forgot which. They all turned out the same.

They camped on the uncomfortably hard seats, under the faux arabesques of Vinnie Massive's Music Hall.

Marek stole the show, fainting in the middle of the agnus dei. Into the arms of his editor and the pages of the Bulletin, the next issue of which featured, besides the usual analyses of Frank Sinatra and the Rat Pack, his variorum edition of On Yout Knees, Oscar Wilde.

Thing Street Asylum

*****

They debated the right number of books for a library. Marek said two hundred and fifty. The best color of clothing was black.

Marek repeated his favorite Wagnerian anecdote. Wagner greeted Dumas in a silk smoking-jacket, which he said was his composing costume. He just couldn't work, without the feel of silk against his skin.

Johnny said Dumas received Wagner dressed as D'Artagnan and proclaimed that he just couldn't write, unless he was an asshole.

Marek said all artists should be aware of their needs....

*****

Johnny strummed the keys of his Royal, like he thought he was Horowitz. He couldn't think of anything to rhyme with Finkelburgher. Except possibly bugger. Which was too obvious.

*****

Another poet's out of work
I think, and as I press the switch,
new duty to neglect and shirk,
I look around me waiting for
the elevator to arrive,
and when the door begins to twitch
reflect how hard it is to thrive
for those of us who labour more
(it sounds conceited, I confess)
than dumber men and profit less
to start. But when I look around
your vestibule I mutter Dear
you haven't done too badly here.
And startle at the churlish sound.

Your name stares smugly from the board
and marble gleams beneath my feet
and only needs to be complete
the plant the Steppenwolf abhorred.

The door slides open and I ride
to floor thirteen and step outside
quite lost a moment and I walk
where I can hear the loudest talk
behind a pastel panel that
is surely Finklestein's own flat
and Finklestein, the translator
of Homer, Virgil, Job and more
non-saleable in local store
exclaims, It's him! and swiftly curbs
the talk and puts the Hebrew verbs
aside and opens up the door.

A lanky Manitoban's there
and runs his fingers through his hair
and conjugates some verb by rote
while Finklestein adjusts my coat.

It's Mr. Midas! FINKELBURGHER
proclaims. He reads his poems and mine
sometimes. And smiles and we shake hands
and Manitoba grins and stands

a little band of grinning men.

A little bit of liquor then?
And Yes, we say and Sit down, he
commands politely. And I see
the small apartment warm and snug
and covered with a Persian rug

like one that woman tore to shreds
whom Philip loves but never weds.
Our talk revolves round art at once
art violated by a dunce
and poetry become a trade
that seminarians profess
and muck away at more or less:
the Muse is lowered to a jade!

And in my cups I have to flail
at him and her and that and this
and every enemy assail
like an inebriated snake
and indiscriminately make
your gentle feast a good excuse
for indignation and abuse:
and cannot stop until too late
and you know everything I hate
but can't discover what I love.

*****

M. Lacroix struck the flint of his disposable blue lighter and drew at the tongue of orange flame. His blond assistant passed down the corridor and out the door. He exhaled as Johnny advanced up the carpet and smiled when he crossed the fine but remarkable line between Accounting and the Executive Section.

You look done in, said the Corporate Secretary.

Johnny had an envelope for the secretary of personnel, but she had gone already. He stood distracted, a tall fair-haired man rustling a manila envelope in nervous fingers. He wondered just how urgent it was. But the typewriter sheathed in black plastic in the corner, and the chair's back pressed tightly against the desk, meant abandonment for the evening.

Just a moment. M. Lacroix entered his office, a large square room with a plate-glass window. Won't you come in?

Johnny followed him across the pastel carpet about two-thirds of the distance to the large desk. He couldn't resist mentally remarking, short men liked big desks. But the rest of the room, unlike the offices of the other executives, was quite simply furnished. There was no pretension, or loud assertion of taste. Just two small paintings, over M. Lacroix's chair, a tranquil Dadanian lake in the fall, on the opposite wall, a stump lot.

So! How goes it?

I don't know.... Johnny extended his arms in a hopeless gesture....

You look like you've had it, he insisted.

Is it really so obvious?

Oh, yes. It's printed on you in italics....

M. Lacroix drew deeply on his cigarette. The phone rang, and he picked it up. Johnny turned to go, but he stopped him. How about a drink with me later? he asked, covering the receiver with his hand.

Sure. That would be fine. Johnny left the Corporate Secretary alone with the telephone, and finished his chores. He hung a fresh garbage-bag in the pail, turned off the Xerox, replaced the key inside the cupboard, and laid out fresh brown towels in the executive washroom.

When he returned the receiver was resting again on its cradle, but M. Lacroix was gone. He felt disappointed, thinking he'd left without him. But passing the office of the Vice-President of Finance he saw, through the half-open door, the Corporate Secretary seated on a little oak captain's chair before an enormous neo-colonial desk. The Vice-President, a gaunt man with closely-cropped gray hair and keen blue eyes, wore spectacles for the occasion. He smiled wolfishly while the Corporate Secretary held forth, weaving a tapestry of purple smoke as he moved his cigarette in weird accompaniment to his speech. Johnny kept going, but passed by again just as the Secretary was finishing.

Ready?

If you are.

Then we're definitely ready.

I feel, quite frankly, childish, confided M. Lacroix, as they passed through the arcade under the travertine tower.

About the meeting? asked Johnny.

Yes. It was still going on when you walked by.

That was why you were talking to Mr. Miles?

That's why. My humiliation! He fished in his jacket pocket for another cigarette.

Why?

M. Lacroix chuckled while he lit-up. I let myself be persuaded.

That's all?

It's more than enough, don't you think?

What was it?

A company. One of the Vice-Presidents wanted to set it up. And persuaded me to go along. So I walked in with him to Mr. Miles. And we hadn't even done a pro forma.

What's that?

A schedule. A kind of prospectus which sets out how much money we intend to make. Obviously very basic. And we didn't have it.

Oh. An oversight.

No. Childishness. Imagine 12 or 13 year-olds. With millions of dollars. He blew a ring of smoke that was quickly spent in the conditioned air. Where shall we go?

The Hotel...

The maitre d' indicated a table with two chairs under the mezzanine. The little Franco-Dadanian sat down immediately, but the tall Anglo-Saxon had to rearrange his chair to accommodate his long legs. M. Lacroix nonchalantly ate a few pretzels from the bowl between them. But Johnny felt too self-conscious. He thought he should say something.

I suppose I should tell you the latest gossip, he said. And felt like an ass.

Go ahead.

Luckily, the waiter arrived.

A bloody mary, ordered the Secretary.

A gin and tonic, said Johnny.

So, said M. Lacroix. Go on with your gossip.

Johnny felt silly, but he began. There was a party a few nights ago given by the secretary of one of the V.P.s. Only half the office was invited. The other half was furious. Then it emerged that the party was only an excuse for the secretary to meet the auditor. So everyone was miffed.

Yes, smiled M. Lacroix. Half because they weren't invited. And half because they were. He sipped his drink. What do you think of such things, Johnny?

Johnny'd had two sips of gin and tonic, so spoke with authority. I don't think company things should socialize after work. Then he stopped, realizing he'd been stupid.

Really?

Well....

I thought I'd invite you to my apartment for a drink. But if you think it's wrong?

Well....

You'll make an exception?

Well, allright....

Good of you.

I didn't mean it like that.

M. Lacroix smiled again, to Johnny's relief. We can have dinner somewhere, too. That is, if it's allright....

That would be nice.

I'd enjoy your company. Besides the fiasco of this meeting, I lost about 10 thousand dollars on exchange. All on paper, of course. He frowned.

Money is paper....

The waiter brought the chit. Johnny reached for his wallet but M. Lacroix stopped him.

Even so, I'm paying. He deposited a large, pink bill in the tray. It looked like it had been printed with a spyrograph. Dadanian paper....

They left through the gleaming brass doors of the old Hotel.....

Let's stop at my apartment first.

Fine.

It'll be a walk.

They went east past the busy station, then south under a moldering trestle.

I usually walk, he said. Are you surprised?

A little. I expected us to take a cab....

Walking's nicer.

Pioneers of Alienation

They crosssed bridges streaming with traffic....

The great warehouses of the harbor-front loomed in the west. Straight ahead the old warehouses had made way for a soaring, new, concrete and plexiglass condominium. It complemented the Hotel, the station, the warehouses, the humming bridges and superhighways, like a jewel its foil....

M. Lacroix searched the bottom of his pocket for the key, and inserted it into an electric box that released the door on a magnetic slide.

This way, he said.

In the gilt elevator, he pressed the disk marked 15. They felt the carriage move. Johnny noticed that the walls were covered with mirrors.

Why so much glass? he asked.

Things scratch the wood, explained M. Lacroix. Human nature.

Even here, Johnny wondered.

Well? They stood at the window. Through the plate glass Johnny saw that the bay had congealed, viscid as candle-wax that had chilled on the surface but was still hot underneath. It glowed....

Behind them, the large room was shabbily furnished with bookshelves, a television, and a brown-coloured sofa and chair that looked second-hand.

What do you think? asked M. Lacroix. Are you surprised?

Yes. Again.

What did you expect? he asked, turning briefly while he smoked.

Something aggressively modern. Chic, they call it.

I'm not flattered.

No, but I'm pleased.

Pleased that my apartment isn't chic! He turned to the cupboard along the wall. Something more to drink.

What about you?

But you're my guest!

Gin and tonic, then. The same.

More gin?

Yes. Please.

You know, he said, when I told my girlfriend about you, she said, There are so many queer things working there.

Me?

Yes. You. He smoked....

Then he asked, changing the subject, What do you think of that picture behind you?

That? Johnny glanced at an oil-painting that hung over the dining table in a little nook.

Tell me honestly.

I think it's ... interesting. It showed a rapt-looking farmer standing beside a rustic house and shed. The brush-strokes had something of Van Gogh's rude vigor.

Hah!

No, really.

Why don't we move closer, and see. They walked together to the canvas and stood before it as they had earlier stood before the window.

See, said M. Lacroix, pointing to a mill-stone and a water-wheel painted beside the house. This is really an internal component of that, and he pointed first to the stone and then to the wind-mill that Johnny had mistaken for a shed....

He painted the stream too narrow, M. Lacroix continued, so the turbine had to be painted on the lawn to the left. And he painted the wind-fan itself on top of the shingles. And look at the smoke. Instead of dispersing, as smoke normally does, it contracts into an impossible inverted V. The more I study this painting, the more I am amused, concluded M. Lacroix.

It was like an autopsy....

Who painted it?

Villeneuve.

It's so unnatural....

Everything's natural. M. Lacroix seemed to lose himself again, watching and smoking....

Then he remembered....

Villeneuve was a barber who suddenly decided to paint. He covered the walls of his house in Chicoutomi with pictures. The neighbors tried to burn him out.

They do things like that? In Quebec?

M. Lacroix laughed. They did things like that everywhere, he said.

*****

Thing Street Asylum

The nearest thing to Montreal in Johnny's old neighborhood was the Hangover House. By day the downstairs was frequented by a few stupefied regulars, at night by busloads of even stupider college kids. Upstairs was the best blues bar in town.

Marek Finkelburgher considered the place rather LOW.

They ordered veal sandwiches from the snack-bar, sniffing fumes from nearby urinals, studying the sea monsters and death's heads painted on the ceiling....

Busloads of college kids arrived for mud-wrestling, in wet T-shirts....

Marek said he was glad Johnny wasn't too refined for Hangover House....

The bartender and his muscular assistants put round tables outside, for the young men in open-necked, polo shirts....

Back in Johnny's Eastern Block house with the Eastern Block couple, they played an Albert King record. Sitting in the most comfortable chair, Marek stirred uneasily....

It wasn't exactly Joseph Schmidt....

Marek was sitting on the patio of Hangover House with a pale, Germanic youth. He waved to Johnny, over phalanxes of dirty glasses. Johnny didn't notice, till Marek stood in front of him, on the sidewalk....

Marek complained that Johnny never recognized anyone on the street, although they were there. He'd walk right past, not noticing.

Thinking of Deane, he agreed. It was a weakness. He wanted to see him so badly, and he could be anyone, or no one! He just couldn't see him. He'd have to make up for it, somehow....

Marek patted him on the shoulder. He knew what it was like, to want someone with high cheek-bones, and a cold heart. He'd help him find Deane, if that was what he wanted. Meanwhile, there was someone else he wanted him to meet, Fritz, the substitute beside him....

Fritz offered Johnny his long, pale hand.

Johnny shook it.

It had done worse things, only that morning. Which was arguable....

Marek and Fritz had lived in Germany, had both enrolled in Jazz Dancing at the U of Titz. Johnny asked Fritz if he knew German. He said just enough to understand the lyrics to Schubert's song-cycles.

Marek stroked a pencil-thin moustache, which made him resemble John Waters, or Walter Benjamin....

Fritz asked Johnny what he liked. He thought of showing him the book of Heine's poetry, but indicated the records instead. Brahms, Bruckner, Wagner, and Mahler....

Marek stroked his moustache again. He said Johnny was really too modest; he had an obscene amount of records. He wondered why they didn't play something, right now. That is, if he wasn't too busy with his rich, corporate boyfriends....

They had so much in common, including, but not restricted to, himself....

*****

Johnny knew he'd be tired for the morning mail.

Finkelburgher seemed to think he could drop by any time, day or night. Last night he set an ambush, waiting in one of those low places on The Spore. Didn't Finkelburgher have a job? Was that why he didn't care when he got up in the morning?

All this while sorting the mountain of mail they'd brought up sixty-five floors in the freight elevator, and poured onto the beige carpet in their room.

Marek had a part-time job filing the Hebrew books at the Robarts. He was proficient in half a dozen semitic languages. In the vegetarian cafés he frequented he would occasionally rise and recite a psalm in a big bass voice, at odds with his mere five feet.

Porko demanded to know about his protege, Fritz. Johnny said he worked at the same place as Marek; he thought Marek had found him the job. Fritz didn't profess to know any languages though, not even German. He did general filing, and earned a lot less than his mentor. Marek had explained with evident satisfaction, that they were making their living the A. M. Klein way for poets.

Porko'd made a living that way too. He'd worked at the front desk of downtown Y's, done simple accounting for a publishing house, stuffed envelopes, and delivered tons of mail. He even changed the toilet paper in the executive washrooms. He especially hated it right after one of them had taken a really big crap. It was the rich, meaty food they ate....

Porko hadn't become a poet. He hadn't written anything. He thought A. M. Klein was precious.

He handed Johnny a piece of junk mail, addressed to Deane. He laughed. For his lover! Which he could understand. But Finkelburgher? No. And Fritz? Was his name really Fritz? They sounded like a Vaudeville Act. Had he ever actually read one of Finkelburgher's poems? He shouldn't believe everything he heard. Everybody was a poet these days.

Johnny had heard the rondeau from On Your Knees, Oscar Wilde! Marek had recited it in the course of the evening. He'd asked Johnny how his writing was going, and lamented that he barely had time for art any more, what with his job and social commitments. But he'd volunteered this poem, which he'd assured him he'd remember, if he'd give him a moment.

Johnny and Fritz respectfully waited a few seconds, then Marek sat up on his side of the bed, planted his stockinged feet together as if in prayer, and inclined his face at exactly 45 degrees from the floor. Insensibly he opened his eyes and smiled at them slyly, like someone who had just enjoyed a refreshing nap in company. He announced with conviction that he was ready, took a deep breath, and began to chant in a droaning voice, as if they were in a Tibetan restaurant on Thing Street.

He and his rondeau inexorably proceeded to their denouement. The initial prostration yielded to a frankly erotic position, illustrated by the great Finkelburgher himself, on his knees as Oscar Wilde.

While Trixie Zane couldn't have done it better, Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre would have kicked his ass....

Marek glanced at Fritz, who had obviously heard it all before. How am I doing? Fritz smiled, and nodded encouragement.

Yes, Johnny could honesty say, he'd heard one of Finkelburgher's poems.

Porko grumbled, he was a poet himself, at heart.

*****

Johnny concluded that Countessa Weasel-Theatre was on Break. She usually sat ensconced, permed and bespectacled, behind her neo-colonial barricade, in a dykey business suit....

The air-conditioning chilled her, she said.

Johnny thought it was the shark-skin suit.

For break, she sipped vending machine coffee in the corner of the lounge behind a giant araucaria. The wealthy Polish pianist landed a good job in a clinic where she'd been administrative assistant, thanks to the offices of Charles W. Handy.....

The Pole became Chief Psychiatrist, which had seemed glamorous then. He was 30 years older, but had delicately faded temples, a pencil mustache, gold pince nez, and a manner that suggested post WWI European alienism.

Not that it prevented anything, Johnny thought. He was thought to be dead. Countessa lived on, between her Metro penthouse and Dadania Ironic, a receptionist again. She sipped her coffee.

She took her time....

Trixie spelled her. Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre taught her to curtsy slightly to the austere Chairman, Mr. Wang. To smile sympathetically when he and Joe, his Chauffeur, arrived late because they'd been drinking....

Trixie was coming up in the world....

Johnny remembered how only last night he'd been sitting in the plush armchair in the lounge counting his dispatches, when he heard her cry out to her girlfriend on the other end of the line, Fucker!

She dropped the receiver, covering her mouth with her hand.

You better not talk that way around Countessa, he said.

Don't worry, I won't. Excuse me.

I don't mind.

Then she retrieved the receiver. Sorry, he heard her explain to her startled friend. I said something I shouldn't've. Not here anyway.

She glanced at Johnny, who returned to his dispatches. She seemed to be booking a lot of trips to Greece.

*****

You're early, Trixie said.

He ignored the bitch. He was working for Butch.

He opened a second door and passed immediately from the bland brown mat-walled reception area into the starker, more functional inner office. Porko had already told him the bad news on Wednesday afternoon.

They took their break in the tavern of an old Hotel one Draine Street. They sat under a smudgy equestrian study, discussing events.

Guess who's leaving? Porko asked him over his beer.

Me?

Try again.

Tell me. I'm really too tired to guess.

Oh, it's really too sad. He was smiling though, as he studied Johnny's face for the reaction.

Who?

Butch.

Devastating. He sipped his beer. But not altogether surprising.

I don't like surprises like that. I was in his office. I asked him if he'd like to go in with us on the Lottery. And he told me he couldn't because he wouldn't be here....

But you know how unhappy he was with that budget procedure, said Johnny.

Yes. They really saddled him with that, didn't they.

Of course. He told me one night when we were working together how he hated a Joe Job. He was upset when Mr. Hamilton got that promotion and that new girl became Controller. That was a blow.

Politics, sighed Porko. Glad I'm through with it.

*****

They heard Butch at the coffee machine.

Excuse me, Sir. Porko beckoned from the mailroom, most fetchingly. Butch entered the sanctuary.

Perhaps you could tell us. Your secretary has no authority to open the Security Benefits, correct?

Of course she hasn't, he flared, clutching the steaming Dixi cup. None whatsoever. As he spoke he nodded and daubed at his glasses, steamier than usual; then he saw at his feet the plundered carton.

Aha! She's been up to her mischief, I see. Too bad for her, he said, as he turned on his heels, and strode off.

Now! cried Porko, exultingly. We'll fix her. Even her boss won't defend her! He dialed the Supervisor's extension.

Helen. Something important's come up. Would you come to the mailroom, please.

He replaced the receiver and turned to Johnny, We'll fix her now. You'll see. You had nothing to do with it. She just gave you the book.

Revenge, thought Johnny.

The tall Irish lady entered the room and pressed her hips against Johnny's desk.

Well, fellows? What's your problem?

It's Trixie, Porko began.

Oh, is it now? Helen hated Trixie too. She sat down in the chair beside the desk. She wanted to hear everything.

Just a few minutes ago Johnny heard her rummaging by the door. She gave him this. Porko presented the incriminating blue book.

My Benefits Book! She has no right! I haven't even authorized them yet! Johnny saw her eyes actually bug out of her head. No right!

Look! See for yourself! He exhibited the plundered box like a carcass.

I'm going to have to talk to her. Now!

Even Butch says she shouldn't have done it. Even her boss is fed up with her, Porko added, hoping she would catch his meaning: Trixie had no protection.

Helen marched down the hall. Even from their room they could hear bits of phrases like Ab-sol-ute-ly no authority ... no right ... unbelievable nerve. Against a background of feeble objections and pitiable, half-choked sobs.

Alethia skulked timorously into the mailroom, clutching her snatch.

I had no idea, she said. Trixie never told me.... Those were Helen's boxes....

Her eyes dilated as Helen's had done, only with fear.

I never imagined, she moaned.

You should know better than to hang out with that girl, Porko scolded her, determined that Trixie would lose her last ally.

Oh, I know, I know....

Alethia shook her head and wrung her hands, sobbing herself.

Johnny pissed himself laughing.

*****

Good-bye. Don't forget to keep in touch, said one of the accountants as he shook Butch's hand.

Right, said Butch. He carried his raincoat slung over the brief-case in his left hand. Alethia waved from the end of the hall, smiling throughthe tears. Two or three other secretaries acknowledged his departure, then resumed typing. Trixie was still in the Ladies' Room.....

Johnny walked quickly past the little group of well-wishers, into their room. His spirit sank as he heard Butch call a general farewell to the whole office as he passed through the reception area. Then he heard a noise at the rear door to the mailroom.

Butch!

Quiet, he said. I went out and came in through the back to say good-bye. Alone....

He extended his hand. I guess this is adieu, he said, smiling.

Only if we don't intend to meet again, at least in this life, Johnny said. Otherwise, it's....

Are you ready? Everybody go!

Aurevoir, they sang, in unison.

*****

Johnny heard nothing from Deane. In his offhand way, he wrote in his last letter, months ago, that he'd visit next May. They'd do lunch.

It was already late July. Because he'd been expecting him for a while he had a lot of beer in his small apartment, a whole case under the kitchen counter. The beer was for Deane and him, but he guzzled it all, when Deane didn't come.

The alky....

One evening he felt especially tired, from delivering the mail, and arguing. Porko insisted he could tell the moral character of an artist from a vinyl recording....

Weren't aural hallucinations among the positive criteria....

Of schizophrenia!

He was beginning to be afraid. If only Deane would call!

He had some more beer to calm down. Then some more. He lost count how much.

Suddenly it occurred to him to call Deane's brother. Deane had told him to call, on their way to the subway that night. Why hadn't it occurred to him before? It would be all right.

He found Deane's surname in the directory, and dialed the number beside his brother's name.

He heard the ringing at the other end. He imagined the disturbance in a ranch-style bungalow where there would be only a few lights on, someone, his brother perhaps, hearing it through the screen door and striding barefoot across the wet lawn he'd been watering....

Hearing it, maybe, over the TV in the basement, and getting up sleepy from the dirty chesterfield and padding across the linoleum in his socks....

He was astonished to hear Deane's voice, only it sounded like a recording....

An aural hallucination!

He stammered, nervousness compounded by alcohol, that he was Deane's friend, whom he'd met last summer.

The voice asked, was he from out west?

N-n-no, he stammered. He was the one from way down east. Whom Deane had promised to visit six months ago. He was just calling to say, hi!

Parodying Deane's casual manner.

It was obvious. He was calling to find out why he'd stood him up.

Johnny's lies exhausted him. In his divey kitchen here was nowhere to sit while he talked on the phone. He tried to rest it on the stove, but the burner was on to boil water for coffee. To sober up.

The alky....

He grabbed it just before the meltdown, fumbling and nearly dropping it. Deane heard what Johnny said (lying again) was difficulty with the line and repeated that Deane was in Alberta, but was expected any time.

Hel-lo?

Johnny begged his pardon for the interruption. Would he be good enough to tell Deane, when he arrived, that Johnny had called?

Sorry to do this to yuh, JOHNNY!

*****

Deane, after all that gold
from Continental Illinois
you can't conceal all we did
together, only brought us joy
a conversation of intense
companionship in desert tents
Arabs visited with wine:

But rise, and be not wroth! not wroth am I;
No, when I see thee, wrath forsakes my soul.

I quoted that Victorian's line
addressed a father from a son

because I think such kind as we
provoke a sort of trinity
first and second sire and dame
third egotistical I am!

No one overhearing this
epistolary whine could miss
my meaning if he hasn't been
an idiot conceived between
a stolid and perpetual pair
of parents, who were always there.

Baby, you and I were not
the sort God wanted to alot
a life of kindred comfort to.

You attended private school
a Ridley where the boys wore blue
jackets and trousers sewn to rule
played baseball on the bank across
the Welland where we hoped they'd toss
their baseball into empty hands.

When
I telephoned I knew. It
was you I talked to. Better men
wouldn't trouble to pretend
identity toward a friend.
Were you taken by a fit
of lying you succumbed to it when
I called again to tell you that
somehow I had known that you
wanted something to divide
us now you'd money.

Friendship was a novel role.
I forgive you if pretense
seemed necessary. Soon the stream
that early interfered will seem
like the Oxus when it flows
typifying the human soul
passing Organje where he slows
his current: certain none the less
whatever the Chorasmian stress
offers with its Deltan loads
anything his strength erodes
of such a solitude will be
enough of land to reach the sea.

*****

It was DEANE's VOICE he heard, LAUGHING!
Like he thought he was the fag with the wine cellar....
Bruce....
Would he give him his number, please?
Sure. No problem.
He hung up, and flew into a rage....
Superficial fuck! Here a whole month already, without bothering to visit him. Impersonating his twin brother. Disguising himself from....
The male boy!

Pioneers of Alienation

*****

Suits clustered around arborite tables. Their heavy sleeves, fringed with white shirt-cuffs, reminded Johnny of the wings of large, somber birds.

That one behind us, said Johnny, pointing to a young navy suit at the next table. Reminds me of Deane. Remember?

Where? asked Porko.

Johnny pointed again.

Porko turned around, as if looking for the waitress. He studied the one Johnny had indicated. Large, bespectacled, open.

I see what you mean. I don't know what it is. He drew his hand over his own features as if he were simultaneously casting a spell on them, and removing a veil.

Directness, simplicity perhaps. Like Greg. He paused for a moment, considering his own young friend. Deane's better looking, though. Thinking of Greg really.

Meanwhile a gaggle of heavily made-up skirts had landed at the opposite table. Hearing a lot of male discussion that wasn't about women, they frowned. Maybe they were paranoid.

They're staring at us, Porko murmured, smiling through his beard.

Maybe they're interested.

Rich and strange?

Not rich.

What happened to Deane, anyway?

He's on vacation , and will be for the next two months. Financed by Mama. I haven't spoken to him since that night I phoned and....

He wasn't himself....

Johnny frowned, resting his elbows on the table, his chin in his hands.

Why would he do that?

Because I'm not rich?

More likely because you're insane.

*****

I had a terrible morning. Elizabeth wanted 222's so I gave her the whole bottle that I keep in the cabinet in our room.

Then she snapped that she wanted a sealed bottle. Porko! This has been opened, she screamed.

Can you beat that? And this after she's been telling me about the great trip she's got planned this weekend to Fire Island.

It's very kinky, she tells me. It must be, with her mastectomy, and her gay lover.

Porko! Shame.

I find these women a pain. Next Leni wanted me to clean the blackboard for a meeting in the boardroom at 10. I've never cleaned a blackboard in my entire life. Not even in school. But there's Leni, Secretary to the President of Dadania Ironic, one hand on her Gucci-skirted ass, the other beating time on the desk, shaking her curls and prating through her tight, pink little lips, I want that blackboard cleaned. NOW. NO ARGUMENT! God!

I know. It's awful....

I'm a fifty-year-old man. In my whole life nobody's ever talked to me like that. Clean the blackboard. Now!

She pierces me with her beady little Aryan bug-eyes. Fascist Bitch! I just walked away. So she waltzes down to Helen who's already half-drunk (who knows what she's on!) and lisping to herself in babytalk, Yeth Lenny Penny! What duth ooo want? And

Leni sneers at her with perfect scorn, You're their supervisor, aren't you?

Yeth Lenny! I yam, Helen answers, thinking all along in the back of her mind how Leni's not an Anglo Bitch at all, how this whole Anglo bit's a big sham. In her spare time Helen pumps beer in a dive on the Draine. She couldn't give a shit.

You're their fucking supervisor, shrieks Leni, showing her origins. Why don't you control them? Today Porko defied me!

So Helen lisps, Wellll, I'll theee what I can dooooo. Looking her right in the eye she asks her about her favorite recipe for MOUSSAKA!

She's really just Leni Papadopoulous from Crete, where her uncle runs this chain of big gay discotheques. The whole office is nothing but a front for their kinky travel agency. They maintain branches at every business school and offer cut-rate trips to Greece to all the recent male graduates. In this fashion they hope to homo-eroticize the Dadanian business elite, till corporate culture and GAY are synonymous....

Thing Street Asylum

Executives of General Motors will wear the ear-ring on the golf-course....
They grunted like pigs. But in the elevator their fellow passengers regarded them as a couple of fucking idiots.

*****

In the silent office, not deserted by Phyllis,
the accountant's rugged secretary,
a blond-haired, male-dressed smoker and drinker,
and Phyllis's niece Cathy, young
and blond, and learning from her aunt,
both blond, blue-eyed, of one family
in the silent office, the office with walls
covered in group of seven paintings,
corporate art for businesses
in the silent office, above the streets,
sixty-three flights of stairs above
the streets that are not silent, but
cannot come here, though they would
in this silent office, while Phyllis waits
with Cathy in the lounge, in my Oxfords I plod
over the plush rugs in the executive wing,
shoes like dark lozenges on pastel,
I plod, making my final round
where you, the president's secretary;,
sit alone at your desk, in profile
unhearing or seeing, these sixty-three floors
above the street (the window even here
shows the bay and the buildings and the city where
we work and live), looking at nothing
but your face in the glass and daubing
at pale lips with red paint. I catch you.
And you see me then in my grayish suit,
you in your elegant clothes (that dress
that flows so softly around your hips
when you rise), and you drop
the glass with your image into your purse and snap
it shut in the silence and I think the whole world,
the buildings, the trees, the bay outside
should go black as the inside of your purse.

*****

The wind whips down Avenue du Parc from Glace Bay. Howls dementedly at the window, at the double-aluminum storm. For effect. From vexation.

The wind is a river. An aerial St. Lawrence. Full of pollen. As if giant handfuls of the stuff, plucked from the sides of the mountain, descended in heaps on the city below. He sneezed into the Royal, into his upright grand, in his two and one half on the top floor of a three-story tenement exactly like hundreds on the avenue.

The wind offered no explanation to the things behind balconies, up steep staircases, in Greek restaurants. It made Johnny take pills, made him dizzy. And consider that he too had nothing to explain, so he kept typing. His neighbors pounded on the ceiling and left hate-notes at his door in the morning, written in the cruelest French of the Age of Reason.

Without a word of explanation; he kept typing.

*****

The wind carries the sound of someone hammering wood through the open window, into the room where he sits typing. The tricks words play.

It was difficult to write, without suggesting someone smashing the window, with a log....

The sharp concussions rode the swell, like the signal on a radio wave. Where from?

Pioneers of Alienation

There was only the white brick wall of the Mile End Library, and the wind, accelerating, nothing between it and Glace Bay.

*****

There was a transit strike in Montreal.

*****

The psyche is on strike, just like the metro
just like the mail. No matter how you hate it,
the being unable to attend a retro
the being unable to appreciate it.
The psyche is on strike. Men working double
must take you, many naturally much stronger
where even you occasionally have trouble.
Their psyches have been on strike a lot longer.
The psyche is on strike: not theirs, yours, mine.
You even have to wait at a bare table
for the decision: walk, or cross the line.
And you are constitutionally unable
to do more than agree to every hike.
Like someone who has had a stroke, not strike.

*****

Things hitched downtown. Brokers in dark three-piece suits carried three-hundred-dollar black leather briefcases in one hand, and thumbed free rides with the other. At Fairmount and Parc teenagers sporting sun-glasses, bright baggy sweaters, and leather loafers wiggled their thumbs, like 60s hippies. The mayor vowed, if the mechanics walked, he'd get serious.

There was sporadic violence, but the provincial government defused tension by staying out of it. Whereas in Hogtown such strikes had a horrible crippling effect, the buses still ran at peak hours, morning and afternoon.

On one of his strolls around the city, Johnny chanced upon a number of drivers sunning themselves in their undershirts outside their garage. Bored. Soe of them probably even had Ph.D.s. Maybe after graduation, he could get a license.

There were pictures of P/Bigge Bank Presidents with buxom floozies plastered all over the tabloids. Marriages and mergers. It the Roaring 20s, Ted Lewis's Jazz Holiday, which his alky father liked so much.

Say folks! Come on and put your troubles away.

Christmas in Maypole City, his brother played some of his father's old records that they still kept in the attic over the garage. Aunt Hagar's Blues. Egyptian Ella. They came by way of The Shack in Maypole City and The Room in Hogtown.

He remembered the last time his father left home, stomping off, slamming the door, jamming with the concussion the bathroom and upstairs doors; of their jerry-built post-war house. Then he absconded with the good German radio and all his records. Jazz Holiday among them.

Some holiday.

He hated Christmas....

It was a long walk. It wasn't just the strike. The weather had something to do with it. Spring relented enough to let it snow in April. But most of the damage was done at night, with just a little evidence unevaporated before the crowds of witnesses, larger than normal because of the strike. After he showered and dressed, the storm diminished to a public school breeze. Suit-coat and sweater weather. It whistled at the kitchen window, for effect.

Walking, he could go up Parc to Jean Talon, west to Boulevard l'Acadie, then north again to Boulevard Metropolitain where it was only another jog west and south down Rockland to Deane’s street. At least on a yellowing copy of a ten-year-old c.v., it was.

Johnny stood in front of a modest condominium. This was where Deane meant when he said he was staying in Montreal, that summer. He'd just finished discussing his in-grown toe-nails, with Trixie. The sidewalks were old and uneven. They must have hurt his beautiful feet....

Deane said his mother lived in a condo. Once Johnny dialed the number under permanent address on the yellowing C.V., waited for the current, and listened to the miles-away ringing till a little old lady with a dry voice answered.

He imagined a room with Turkish carpets, heirlooms.

So many pretty things....

Till the ringing in his ears thundered over everything. Roared, like a water-falll....

Sorry, wrong number....

He continued along Deane's street....

On the left, modest suburban bungalows, lawns and mature trees. Pleasant. Agreeable. More jerry-built postwar boxes, like his in Maypole City, gratefully dwarfed by even this insignificant nature: maple trees, hedges.

Orchard Heights.... The English Teacher used to sigh at the white stucco walls, when she drove by with her hep husband in the green van. A real neighborhood.

She never lived there....

He was bothered by the tired, brick-faced apartment building. Or was it a condominium? How could one tell?

Through grassy spaces between the towers Johnny watched cars and trucks speeding along Boulevard Metropolitain, like jets observed from the ground. Unnaturally slow....

In the suburbs the bus saved him. It mediated between man and superhighway. It retrieved him at a little station under the masonry of an overpass like a Roman aquaduct, transported him along unwalkable highways, and deposited him at the station of his choice.

Too bad about the strike!

Suddenly his way was blocked by a great super-highway facing a squat building under a giant Zoncolite sign, a ten story-sized bathing beauty pouring a cataract of blinding white Zoncolite over the roof, the building, the whole world....

It was a conflagration....

She had enormous milky tits, naked except for a little black lace over the paps. She wore a white Stetson, and dazzling white vinyl cowgirl boots....

Her golden tresses cascaded over her left shoulder, but her white mini-skirt exposed her crotch.

Her eyes were blue and hard as a glacier, her grin wide and flat as a prairie....

It came, liike a Rube Goldberg epiphany.

Sorry to do this to you, JOHNNY!

Deane was in Alberta....

*****

A dozen cowbodys sprawled around the grease-stained garage. 16 to 20 year olds with lady-killer pencil moustaches, they straddled benches or squatted on the counter. They watched him shyly, as if afraid of CLIENTS.

The radio was on:

You can trust your car.... They sang, implying a lot more.

He asked a young man in tinted aviator glasses if MacArthur was near. He peered at the margin of the map tacked to the wall behind the till, as if MacArthur were somewhere over the edge. He called to an older man with greasy hands. The older man returned with an even larger map. He smeared a spot with his thumb. Two, maybe three miles.

It was 4 o'clock and the buses were temporarily running again. The sidewalk kept dwindling, merging with the concrete highway. One couldn't simply cross and change direction. They hadn’t built it for pedestrians.

*****

The driver said in French, now was his chance. Chance for what? A job? He indicated MacArthur below and behind them.

He got out on an overpass. Bus had followed empty bus along stretches of grid-locked highway. The subways had roared past empty. Slowly the buses had filled again. Passengers had started to seep into the metro stations; they

had flowed, and finally flooded into the trains. The torrent immediately ran dry. No one wanted to be stranded when the strike resumed tomorrow, marooned like Crusoe but on a concrete island in a sea of traffic.

Like Friday, on Saturday night....

*****

On his way home from the Laurier Metro he met Babyface Marjoram on Clark.

Babyface always detained him for an hour or so. Or tried to. He carried a bag full of ripe bananas. Johnny suggested that they sit down somewhere, but Babyface never wanted to. He scratched his 60s length hair, tugged on his glasses, fumbled for a ciggy with fat fingers.

He'd lived in Hogtown, in a Thing Street hotel. He wouldn't elaborate....

He complained about pressure. It got worse, now classes were over. What a paradoxical situation. Babyface loved expressions like paradoxical, pseudo-intellectual (which he always pronounced swade-o) and, especially, ALIENATION....

Since he started taking courses at the University of Montage, summers were terrible. For the sole English Marxist at McGill U, life had been brutal. All those swade-os! French made it alienating. Summer was the cruelest season....

He couldn't understand why Johnny went to the University of Montage when he could have gone to McGill. Babyface Marjoram himself would have, but he'd been banned. Some little affair. His emotional life got the better of him. Aggravated assault. Stalking. Anonymous hate-letters. Nothing they could pin on him, though.

But they knew....

When Babyface Marjoram learned in advance (tipped off by Rube Goldberg) that Johnny was taking such-and-such a course, he always arranged to take something else.

He hated things who insisted on sharing ideas in class. He preferred down-to-earth things, who shared joints. There were only so many A's. When he attended a seminar, he didn't want to have to confront the glare of a rival. He wanted to gaze into the vacant face of a friend....

Johnny made him look bad. He'd tell the sexy chic at the circulation desk in the library that Johnny was always talking about her dead. Then he'd get Johnny to ask her for her telephone number. She'd call the cops and Johnny'd get busted. Har har har. So what if Johnny was gay.

The cops hated fags even worse than psychos like him. Last summer he got arrested for shop-lifting, so he asked the cops how come they busted him for stealing a little nasal spray for his allergies (coke) but let fags like Johnny walk around free, and go to university....

It was outrageous!

An anonymous hate-letter would fix that....

Smoking. Thinking. Synapses slowly firing like the wheels of an over-turned train-wreck. Nasty, and absurd.

Johnny thought he recognized in Babyface's weak jaw and low brow the erosion visible all over Montreal. The Lachine Canal clotted like an old man's jugular. Dadania clotted like LaSalle's passage to China. Fountains buried in sand under the City. Rivers with arteriosclerosis. Highways bumpy as a phrenologist's chart. It was all the same. Falling apart. Dadanian Shield full of holes. Stinking cavities. Nuclear waste dumps. All those abandoned mine shafts glowing in the dark like angry zits. Acne covering several provinces. The whole country smelling like dead fish.

Coelacanths....

Fuck, he realized. It wasn't Dadania; it was Dadanians! Low-grade morons, mental weaklings, hereditary defectives. Dypso, mono, demono, moral maniacs. Self-polluters and secret masturbators.

Take a good look at Babyface Marjoram. Bruised fruit in tight dirty blue-jeans.

Bananas rotting on top of the fridge....

*****

To be Dadanian was to be afraid of the environment; to feel inferior; to have a branch-plant mentality; to believe that virtue was always elsewhere (in London or Paris, ha!); to be afraid of the neighbors; to be fascinated by trains; to be afraid of excellence; to espouse mediocrity; to have a garrison mentality; to be colonial; to want to be a part of something BIG; to belong to an Empire; to wonder what it meant to be Dadanian; to believe that the age of knowing what it meant to be anything was past; to console oneself that in one's uncertainty one was (post) modern and ahead of the game after all; to think that if the last century didn't belong to us, then the next one would, or to nobody....

*****

The white brick wall of the Mile End Library.

Thing Street Asylum

Tabula rasa turning aquamarine like old window-glass. Johnny's goldfish in the bowl on the sill, frantic at this hour. Its silly concave world, a convex bowl. Johnny peered obliquely, at the pink gravel. Yes, the color of the brick wall of the Mile End Library. At other times, green, violet, mauve, indigo.

They called it white, because they were insiders. On the other side of the glass, through the revolving door, it was something else. So were they....

Meanwhile, the long filament hanging from the fish's ass, was only getting longer. It was beautiful, for shit. Garbage in, garbage out, only it wasn't all garbage. It was changed, but for the better. So like writing....

*****

He compensated for more than the gloominess of the alley. If, in the winter, he stood on the warped and rusted fire-escape before going out, and felt a few wet flakes of snow on his upturned face, he knew a blizzard was raging on Parc. He judged that it was only 6 o'clock. How long had he been talking to Babyface Marjoram? An hour at least. Now it was suppertime.

He went into the kitchen and took a slice from the loaf of black Russian bread from Boyman's Bakery. He spread margarine on it at the red arborite kitchen-table, wondering if there was such a thing as white Russian bread. Or red for that matter. He went to the fridge and removed a bottle of beer and some cheese that he had purchased from a Portuguese shop on The Main.

He brought the beer and a piece of the cheese into the living-room, to the Royal typewriter. He sat down in front of the machine; he wondered what the neighbors were doing, then forgot about them.

*****

A fine coil, a spring, a balance made of ashes, had settled on the bottom of the goldfish bowl.

Johnny sat at the Royal, and wound the carriage, watching the white brick wall of the library turn blue in the rain.

He should have studied Business Administration. Deane had.

The cutie....

*****

Now it was a fluorescent blue, just after sunset when everything glowed unnaturally. The gravel lane turned brown. The roof appeared to float as the stories beneath it dissolved. The darkness in the alley rose like a river. The wind rose, too.

The hood of the light fixture over the fire-escape tolled like a buoy against a 40-watt light bulb. He ought to do something about that. It kept him awake.

The last thing he heard on the radio, before he switched off the set in disgust, was the weather....

*****

When he was five, he asked a middle-aged cousin what a truck was. She pointed through the window of Ma's car....

What Montreal was could be answered the same way, provided like Moses, one didn't get too close, or simply stayed on Nebo.

Johnny's cousin would have pointed frantically there, and there, and there! Everywhere, and nowhere. The Land of Canaan.

Sometimes he felt he assaulted the mountain, briefly at one with the motorists whose vehicles seemed to pant and paw the asphalt in front of the Cartier monument.

We come from two cultures not for strife but to work together for the common welfare....

A bad poet had designated the angel on top a protector of language. But it would have been more accurate to say languages. If the angel stood for anything, it was Babel....

When you went up, it looked, sounded better. You wanted to stay up, go higher....

The view from Deane's Cessna, till, inevitably, it landed....

*****

The wildest flanks of the mountain were restrained by a network of Lilliputian paths, where Lilliputians confidently exposed themselves, obese and varicose (not all of them, though). The paths were a net, a grid, cast over a random

reality. Johnny caught some, in the form of a half-naked man, sleeping on the grass. He walked closer, and the man stirred, slapping the blanket beside him, for Johnny to lie down.

He was with the Mounties....

Afterwards, he met other Travelers like himself, shamefaced, eyes downcast, minutes away from streets, where everyone boldly gazed at everyone else, totally ignorant....

He found an old, rusted wheel, that he picked up for its worn, iron teeth.

Anyone meeting him, gave him a wide berth. Like he was a an atavism, a machine-age psychopath, a mad miller.....

*****

He recognized him, by his shaggy mane and his big, fat ass. He hailed him, and Babyface Marjoram stopped, waiting for Johnny to catch up. He had his ubiquitous white plastic shopping-bag, but Johnny was empty-handed again....

Babyface the love-locks from his eyes, with a pudgy hand. Nictotine pinkies. He was on his way to the Metro store, and asked where Johnny was going.

To get some envelopes from the Greek stationer up the street.

Babyface Marjoram said he would wait for him....

When Johnny returned with his envelopes, Babyface was loitering in front of Jupiter, across Parc....

*****

Johnny asked what he was doing, now the term was over.

He said not much, mainly waiting to get his results. He said he couldn't do anything else, till he knew he was all right.

Johnny told him to relax. They never failed anyone.

Babyface said he must be glad now that that French course was over; he would be. He'd cheer....

There were a lot of English Ph.D.s (Rhodesians, he said) taking La Literature Quebecoise as the last course before their theses.

Babyface explained. It wasn't a case of saving the best for last. They'd put it off as long as they could, afraid of its adverse effect on their lousy G.P.A.s. On their Dadania Council Grants, their Daddies....

Johnny admitted that at break-time all they talked about was grants, loans, applications, dead-lines: did you hear? did you get?

All the Rhodesians were straight, married, had children, and condos. The ideal was a 35-year-old poeticule, recently published with the assistance of a Daddy, with an MA in English composition from Discordia Concourse, a job teaching English Decomposition, a bitchy high-strung spouse, and a couple of brats that could be exploited for leverage when it came to cadging extra work or a loan. Literature was a job. Baby's new shoes. Junior's next hamburg. Weak-sphinctered Auden notwithstanding, it made things happen....

It was Opening Exercises all over again. They invisibly got up and thanked it, for making them wankers. Their lost followers (he meant, readers) bleating A-men.

They were just bureaucrats.

Civil servants! He didn't understand how they ever copulated....

Babyface didn't follow. He loved kids....

Johnny said he never felt safe. He didn't have a real job, and they didn't either. He said it was bad enough having himself to support, but being responsible for anyone else was unthinkable....

Babyface Marjoram agreed. The birth-rate in Quebec was the lowest in Dadania, which was the lowest in the world....

Johnny laughed at this reversal from the heyday of Catholic loin-power. Political instability....

It was hard....

Worse, it was sterile....

A crone burdened with groceries emerged from the store behind them, jostled Babyface Marjoram's bags, and cursed.

Vous n'avez pas la rue!

Babyface Marjoram smiled. The point was, they felt secure. He and Johnny didn't.

Johnny wasn't satisfied. It wasn't enough that they fed, clothed, sheltered their children, made payments on houses and cars. Had big bank accounts. The works. That they should get all these perks and call themselves writers was too much. Nelligan savait que l'ecole est faite pour les litterateurs, et non pour la poesie.

At least he wasn't going to do the Bible reading....

Thing Street Asylum

*****

Rube Goldberg was Fuhrer. His motto was Every Goldberg book is a Golden Book. He had published any number of short stories in small-press Dadanian mags and sketched sketches in the manner of Wodehouse and Thurber. He had even had a piece published in the New Yorker. But he had built practically his whole reputation on Blowing a Big Balloon. Which in frequent tiffs with fellow litterateurs he periodically withdrew from the anthologies, for example, when Susquehannah Mooday and her husband Crackers wouldn't publish anything by Rube's good buddy, Mooncalf. He got as much as he could out of that balloon, but it was all a lot of hot air. Somebody pricked it.

Rube Goldberg treated serious writers with condescension. His supreme compliment of such-and-such an author was that he/she was (almost) pure gold(berg). He surrounded himself with toadies for whose productions he wrote glowing little blurbs that appeared in the same number of some smallpress rag as their windy disquistions on Aeolism in Big Balloon and A Tale of a Tub. He periodically collected and published excerpts from interminable works in progress which the Rhodesians were always in the middle of and never seemed to finish. He let there be no doubt about it, this was yet another vanguard like the great ones of the 60s, which he had also led. Nowhere, Johnny thought.

Johnny recalled how he had chided one of Rube's toadies in his linguistics course. Lambert Starkman was writing a dissertation on Dadania's Dipso, Miltown Alcorn's drunken abuse of the fricative: fr-r-reighter ... fr-r-rigate ... fr-r-rig. Lambert made a special pilgrimage to Hogtown just to see Miltown's famous flophouse hotel. Took the whole fucking family. Back of the ranchwagon jumping with the literateurs of tommorrow. Vomiting on the upholstery. Just like Milltown Allcorn.

Lambert distracted the class to natter about some critical essay he obviously didn't understand. He made them buy a book full of his execrable doggerel, Blue Funk. Baby needed shoes. Lambert needed Doc Martin's. He expressed bovine satisfaction with the number of children's books to which it was possible to apply the principles of deconstruction. Like Blue Funk, Johnny said. Because deconstruction had nothing to say about literature. Paradise Lost was the same as Uncle Wiggley.

Next Tuesday in Rube Goldberg's Nostalgic Memoir Through the Ages course, Johnny said something disparaging about post-structuralists, and watched Rube Goldberg blush for his creature, Lambert.

Who would not wince for his protege, his creature, his lover?

Rube warned him not to be so adversarial.

Then he cut the class short, so he could watch BLACKADDER.

*****

Babyface Marjoram smiled. He had been loitering in the hall while Johnny repeated the favorite aphorism of Norrie Freed, that authorial opinion was of special interest but no special authority. Johnny explained that he hadn't meant to deny Rube a heaping great portion of the latter, but Rube had been wounded in his vanity; he fancied himself a true disciple of the great Freed.

Rube asserted that he had enjoyed both careers, author and critic. It was in the latter capacity that he expressed his opinions.

His Sewage was the Prelude of the 21st century. Matt Door was Dadania's Henry Sutpen. Powerheads of Bitown was a title with GUSTO. Spencer Tracey was a DAMN good actor....

Benito Mussolini was a great democrat. George Elliot never got enough. For Tiffany Finelay, any amount was excessive.

So much for criticism; he was equally good at writing.

Johnny thought of the old candy commercial featuring a couple of morons banging their rolls together: Sucks is a candy mint, Sucks is a breath mint; Sucks is two, two mints in one.

The Rube would have given you cavities, and halitosis....

Babyface Marjoram still smiled. He'd a whole M.A. in Creative Writing at McGill. He'd majored in alienation....

His minor was initiation....

He'd use some Rube Goldberg device. Grace in the Novels of Margaret Lawrence. He certainly needed some....

He'd already done Blochner's American Modernism and the Drug Trade. They did reefer in class. Montage U was still a hep place in the 90s. The profs really got down.

Babyface confessed. He hated Hart Crane. When Johnny said something about his homosexuality, he perked up. That was it. Crane was a fag. He'd guessed all along. Whitman too. He'd always known about HER. And there was this professor at Discordia Concourse. Bobby Kay. He knew about her too (and had already informed the Dean, in one of his numerous anonymous hate letters). But he hadn't know about Crane. So Hart Crane was a ff-ay-gh. Johnny didn't want to be adversarial, so he shut up.

Once Johnny showed Rube Goldberg an article about the homosexuality of Henry James, whom Rube considered one of his greatest imitators. Rube exploded that one day his biographer would discover that all his life he had been a closet heterosexual.

Johnny said he wondered what he thought was so interesting about authors anyway.

That shut Rube up, for a while.

Except to mutter that Lambert Starkman would ghost-write his autobiography....

The sun was setting behind the mountain and the side of the street where they stood was cast in shadow. Johnny felt that he had descended without having entered. He did not even like this city that jostled him on the sidewalk, questioned his right to stand there talking. To slobs like Babyface Marjoram.

*****

As he sat down at the Royal that night, he was pleased to remember the iron wheel. That the mountain was comprised of such pieces....

*****

I can't get closer than this memorandum,
District Policier 30, Bureau Tandem
and ABC Sport Cycles. Any nearer
would be the same as shouting at my hearer
the sentence of the street, a broken canto
in a variety of curious cases
expressive of the future Esperanto;
and you would have to step back a few paces.

The Y is there, the wherefore of its scholars
who frame the question in the public lobby:
in rooms, for several hours, and 50 dollars
they answer. Love's the most expensive hobby.

Aux Lilas offers dinner to non-smokers
across the street, in Banks and Custom Brokers.
In chambers over the New Navarino
are travel agents, doctors, a casino:
Rex Travel, Leon Copnick, Ho-Sen Chen,
the nostrum MAKE IT JAMAICA AGAIN.
A window simpers full of marriages
and a photographer's miscarriages.
Another brashly goes without the sign
BRASS being pronounced loudly by the shine.
The Café Parc du Chine suggests a section
a Parc that hitherto escaped detection.

There, The RIALTO, closed by video
rents to a Rothschild, windowspace for show.
The light effluvia of bijouterie
mix with the heavy smells of tabagie
and posters of Caligula trade stances
with Rambo, in a battle over glances.

Café Rialto, regularly tacky
offers its guests the usual souvlaki,
but Café Helios is like a trophy
at the conclusion of the street: a strophe.

*****

The weather turned warm for the summer. No false start this time. All the establishments that could moved onto Parc. Bakeries, delicatessens, supermarkets restricted by their counters and refrigerated shelves, at least opened their doors. But the smaller groceries put boxes of fruit on the sidewalk, and the cafes and restaurants set out tables and chairs.

Thing Street Asylum

Johnny frequented the Greek restaurants, which reminded him of the Greek restaurants on the in Hogtown, identical in respect to their arborite tables, plastic and chrome chairs, hanging plants.

There were places where he never went, with pictures on the door of naked waitresses balancing trays of drinks, and lurid signs proclaiming Danseuses Neues. Sordid places were not the same everywhere, he supposed. Their context differed, their presentation. Hogtown establishments were less candid.

*****

Johnny took advantage of the fine weather to visit the Nelligan homes on Laval. He avoided the traffic on Parc, so much noisier now that the buses were running again, and walked south on Esplanade, past Jeanne Mance Park, the grey walls of Hotel Dieu ahead. Obviously healthy, scantily clad, young men and women rode bicycles, jogged, threw Frisbees, or (tired of sport) sunned themselves on the green flank of the hill.

Johnny walked a few streets east on Duluth, till he came to Laval. The Nelligan family had lived at 3686, then 3958 Laval, where Emile's friends had carried him in triumph after that last reading at Chateau Ramezay, just before he went crazy. He decided to start at the bottom of the street, following at once the Nelligan family's moves, and Emile's triumphs.

The first house was opposite a hot treeless little park where the houses had been demolished. Johnny sat on the edge of a concrete pot, intended for flowers. The windows were squeaky-clean, and reflected the bright yellow, blue and red compacts parked along the boulevard. Clearly it was still a good neighborhood. Better. The square stolidity of the house, two double-windowed stories topped by a mansard, bespoke the father, inspecteur des postes. The second house, only a few doors north of Duluth, was of similar design but looked more fragile. Perhaps it was the gingerbread over the porch.

Old benches on either side of the double-doors, where the poet must have meditated. Imagine!

Then forty years in the Asylum....

*****

In every series you are bound to show
our one and only Edgar Allan Poe.
Strap-hanger in the subway of the psyche,
admirers stare with ill-concealed dislike,
get off at the next station and still say
you were the indication of the way.
Yours ended in a series of retreats.
They must have changed the signs, confused the streets.
Rue Laval proclaimed you Baudelaire's equal.
Hochelaga was to be the sequel.
They never were, who styled themselves your plurals
but smelled of libraries and intramurals,
Charles Baudelaire's equal, and in such a quandary.
The King of Prussia sends his dirty laundry.
Madame Bernier, her journalism flagrant,
reported yours was very clean, and fragrant.
They regularly trimmed your leather pinion;
we scanned the printed level of opinion:
Mad Poet's more attractive than that other,
that's Bad Boy, enamored of MA!
We will encounter nothing of that order
in Little Giddings on the New York border.
You being banned (such are the tricks of fame)
along with Iroquois on Notre Dame.

*****

He walked home through the narrow streets of downtown Montreal. There was a lot of construction on Ste Catharine. The old Woolworths had been demolished and not all of the debris (chunks of brick, concrete, pieces of tile) had been removed. Johnny thought how hot the workmen must be, in their jeans and heavy boots. The wooden

walkway that had been improvised around the project was crowded with ambling pedestrians, so he walked against traffic on the side of the road. The sky was beginning to darken when he went into the Bay Store.

The young, dapper guards with company crests on their jackets eyed his torn, blue garbage bag from the Sally Anne.

He wanted to look at spring jackets. He went straight to the basement, where he knew there were cheap clothes. From a speaker he heard a voice on a radio program announce a Weather Alert. Gaggles of shoppers strolled and laughed in parti-colored shorts and loose short-sleeved shirts. Many of the men wore sun-glasses. Young clerks bearing clipboards, better-dressed than the guards, asked if everyone had Bay cards. They got facetious and, sometimes, flirtatious replies.

Johnny found the cheap spring jacket he was looking for, but was unsure of the size. Things wore things loose these days. He took a large and a medium to the lady at the cash and asked her her opinion. She said she was going on her break so she didn't have much time, but volunteered that the large was more in style. So the large it was. Johnny paid the lady so she could go on break.

The street was dark enough for the streetlights to be on. Johnny decided not to tarry in the record store. He hurried directly home, up Parc.

The air was wetter and hotter than before he went into the store. There was occasionally a lightening flash followed (eventually) by a low growl of thunder. The wind picked up beside Jeanne Mance park. There were men playing ball in just shorts and shoes. They were all going to get wet the men playing ball, the gaggles of shoppers, the ambling pedestrians.

The radio voices were good to their word. The sky grew darker still, the wind picked up even more. The drinkers on the patios of the Greek restaurants scurried indoors. Their empty foam-flecked glasses stood abandoned on the tables till a waitress saved them from the wind. Somewhere a glass shattered.

The hallway of Johnny's building stank of dogs, and hotdogs. He got into his apartment just as the rain did. He shut the window in the kitchen. The rain was solid a moment, then the hail fell like music, striking arpeggios on the window, the cars, the roof.

That night after the storm the lady downstairs came up and demanded that he stop typing.

Johnny wouldn't.

*****

In twenty-six, for reasons of salvation,
St. James became a storefront congregation.
Boutiques and pharmacies rent premises
constructed to support the services
the holy could not otherwise afford
without land, in addition to The Lord.

The downtown must be physically blind
to see no church, spiritually behind.
They post the name of every organist
that plays on Tuesday, outside on a list.
But cover-up the name of that pariah
who set fire to the Church of the Messiah.

The usheress explains that huge rosettes
fell where la Pankhurst led her suffragettes.
The boards that seated them, upon extension
met with a male Fire-Marshall's apprehension
and were secured, except for one example
exhibited to things as a sample.

There is no body in the sanctuary
except for an occasional antiquary,
shoes Gucci, jacket Sung, hair Presley
to the derision of Whitefield and Wesley.
For whom edification was not this:
a nice design, or just an edifice.

*****

Butch made plans to visit Israel and stay with his girlfriend, but the part about staying fell through.

She was paranoid, obsessive-compulsive; she thought Rube controlled him, with wires in his nipples....

On his abbreviated tour he was struck by a stained glass window some French artist made for a synagogue; he felt sure he could use it in a poem, somehow. It was forming in his brain, into those uneven lines he wrote.

On the return flight he read an article in The Dadanian Norm by the grandson of a survivor of Auschwitz. He would work it in: the Israeli situation, the Palestinian insurrection, his inability to have an erection; there was a poem in it, somewhere.

His problem was rent, after his girlfriend stopped paying. He went to see Johnny, whom he'd met up with in Dadanian Literature, a real sucker....

How much do you pay here, if you don't mind my asking? The Butch had asked, gazing around: warped hardwood floors, flaky high ceilings, two and a half rooms.

Three hundred.

Three hundred!

That's expensive? Johnny was used to Hogtown rates.

I pay five-twenty for a six and a half. Between two things that's only two-sixty.

Cheap, Johnny agreed, Compared to Hogtown.

The Butch knew. That was why he followed Johnny to Montreal. Cheap rent, and everything else.

He stayed, because of Rube Goldberg, several autographed copies of whose works were in his study: In anticipation of a long and FRUITFUL relationship..., For Butch: Writer, Scholar, Teacher, Critic, FRIEND and – (Johnny replaced it, disgusted.)

WHORE!

In the prestigious Montage Bulletin The Butch had glowingly reviewed every volume of Rube's epic polytome treatment of the Hogtown Waterworks, The Sewage, as soon as it appeared on the syllabus of Rube's course, before utterly vanishing, forever....

He'd taught d-composition at Discordia Concourse, forever; he was tired....

After he got his bursary, he'd regard this as a period of apprenticeship, trial, and grand larceny....

He didn't have it yet....

He noticed a copy of Essays in Dadanian Fiction on Johnny's bookshelf, a number featuring Rube's auto-interview. He took it down, and read the (relatively) chaste inscription to Johnny: a LITTLE something to get you started, on Rube Goldberg Studies....

*****

Then Butch's grant came through: twelve thousand loonies, no strings attached, unless you considered a thesis proposal a contract. The Ministry'd let him teach one course without deducting anything, so he'd make eighteen thousand loonies, more than he'd made in his entire life.

He could buy a Walkman, some records, a disc player, a new Rad Cycle.

He could paint his apartment....

*****

The phone rang beside the Royal.

Johnny? Or should I say Matt Door? Of the Matt Door Chapter of the Rube Goldberg Admiration Society!

Butch! It's you!

Your typewriter betrayed you.

How?

Rube Goldberg has one just like it. At first I thought he wrote it himself: Rube Goldberg for the Nobel Prize! Rube Goldberg to Stockholm! Ha ha ha!

You mean he's capable of self-promotion.

He suffers agonies at Prize-Time. Never leaving the house, confining himself to his study, just staring at the shiny post-war telephone. Zero hour, Sweden Time. Hallucinates. Sees tall, depressing men in evening dress. The one in Pince Nez looks up from a copy of The Sewage. Damn, those Dadanians sure write good. They have GUSTO! Rube hears bells. He grabs the receiver. Starts his acceptance speech. It's his therapist....

You dropped it off this morning....

Such things are done on moonless nights....

You could have done it last night. I was at a party in NDG, at a friend's I hadn't heard from in weeks.

The boyfriend. Lambert Starkman!

I dropped a cranky letter in his mailbox.

Yeah?

He invited me over. For a barbecue. We had sugar pie.

I assume this is one of your married friends?

It had to be Starkman.

As a matter of fact, it was. With a little girl, too. I'm no good with kids, The Butch continued. They sat her in my lap, and I didn't know what to do, so I said, you want to be my girlfriend, don't you?

Johnny was speechless. He knew The Butch had recently broken up with his girlfriend, a British woman who carefully enunciated every word. Her conversation was like an elocution drill. A mental case....

He was throwing her in the air and everything.

Yeah?

The Butch promised him lunch and plenty of good conversation; he could listen to all his favorite old records for free. All Johnny had to do was paint. Butch had already purchased 2 large brushes, 2 rollers, 2 tiny brushes for the trim around the moulding in the guest room and the tiny glass panes in the door to the splendidly nouveau riche dining room, and (of course) 2 enormous cans of dazzling white Zoncolite.

You don't waste time, do you? Johnny said, but he accepted the offer.

*****

Johnny arrived in the vestibule of The Butch House, where he'd visited him only once before, late one evening during a heat-wave, and they'd cooled off with the cat on their balcony, watching the approaching storm....

Butch went topless. Johnny noticed the electrodes in his chest. Very sparkish. It looked like a stumplot, shaved, like they'd only recently been implanted. They were probably bi-polar.

Johnny wondered if there was any juice in his battery. He reached out to touch the hard protruberances, like he was in Physics Class with Mr. Wizard, but Butch intercepted him with his Favorite Iron Maiden T-Shirt, all-sweaty on the railing....

There was a bright flash followed by a deafening thunder clap as he attempted to pull it tight, over his paps.

Johnny prevented him.

He rubbed his hands over his gleaming shoulders, like Bela in Glen or Glenda.

Pull the strings! Pull the strings!

What? He demanded, missing that allusion.

Knick knack, paddy wack!

There was another flash, and another. Right on cue. More deafening thunder-claps, drowning his cries.

He was playing a Theremin.

Butch had a Theremin, in his chest!

Now there wasn't a cloud in the sky.

The cheap tin mailbox was empty.

He pressed the buzzer beside a stenciled number 3, wondering if Butch felt it in his tits. The vestibule door hung open, so he went up. He noticed octagonal white tiles like the ones that decorated the vestibule, landings, and bathrooms of his Welfare Hotel. They were arranged in squares within a florid, blue border.

The Zoncolite of yore.

The electric light was out, and the skylight was so thickly covered with fly-shit that by the second landing he was in twilight; he pausef, while his eyes adjusted. He groped and pushed at a door at the top of the staircase. It swung inward, the light blinding him.

Had breakfast? The Butch shouted from the bathroom.

Yes. Thanks.

Just wait till I finish cleaning my teeth.

The Butch emerged from the bathroom, in old corduroys, a blue-checked shirt, and slippers. He was wearing glasses; before he must have worn contacts. His hair was shit-blond turning grey. He was short, and getting fat. He hadn't bothered to shave. Middle-age men went seedy, after they got divorced.

He'd been up late, transcribing the transmissions that he picked up moon-bathing on the balcony....

He plastered them around the baseboards in the dining-room, and the spare bedroom. There was a great transparent sheet of plastic over the dining room table on top of which he'd stacked the stereo and most of his records, and (of course) there was newspaper all over the hardwood floor....

After some preliminary discussion about the condition of the plaster, they decided it was better not to touch the ceiling at all. They couldn't make up their minds about the color of the walls because they only had plain white Zoncolite and every wall in the flat was painted beige, off-white, or cream.

The Butch decided to leave the decision to the landlady, Mrs. Stein. After all, she was paying for it. He trotted downstairs in his slippers to ask her.

The newspaper's in the kitchen, if you want to read it, he said, on his way.

There's newspaper all over, Johnny said. He had been scanning the headlines, trying to follow a story.

Today's! The Butch barked from the landing.

Thing Street Asylum

Johnny heard The Butch's voice and Mrs. Stein's, with a faint Jewish or German accent. The Butch was explaining the situation. Johnny caught snatches of conversation like, it's pure white, but all the rest, which Mrs. Stein must already have understood, and made up her mind against: No, no! Definitely not that. From the kitchen, where he had been reading all about the tantrums of Madonna and Billy Joel in the entertainment section of The Gazette, he heard the newsprint crackle under the door.

White's out, The Butch said, red-faced. Gets dirty too fast.

Mrs. Stein found another tin in the basement, but it turned out to be green bus Zoncolite.

Ugh! What a stench. The Butch hammered it shut again.

Bus Zoncolite?

Yeah, her husband ran a bus-service for Hasidim.

You mean if a hundred Hasidim wanted to visit the Mountain, they'd....

Yeah. This means I have to go to Pascal's to get something she calls No. 18 Burnt Umber.

Can I come along?

Stay here, read the paper.

He returned to the entertainment section. Billy Joel and Madonna were certainly very temperamental. Bill Evans, the cat, strolled by in his grey suit, lazily meowing. He looked at Johnny and did a double-take, like an old uncle wandering into the kitchen for a nip and finding the minister there. The Butch had told him, not to feed Bill Evans....

The color chart said one half-tube per gallon of white Zoncolite, The Butch said; it was the decomposition teacher talking.

Johnny opened the tin with the end of a screwdriver, while The Butch squeezed a small gob of the noisome stuff into the Zoncolite, where it floated disgustingly. Johnny stirred and stirred, but the Zoncolite returned to its former pure white condition. White as the boots on the Zoncolite Girl.

It's like intermarriage, Johnny suggested.

That's not how it looked in the picture, The Butch said.

Maybe it'll look better on the wall, Johnny offered.

Yeah, whiter.

Johnny did most of the nouveau riche mouldings, a standard feature of old Outremont flats. The Butch did the large surfaces with the roller. He let Johnny do the detail work, because any idiot could do that. The Butch periodically dove under the giant tarpaulin over the table in the diningroom, to insert a new tape in the deck. Like an avid old lecher (Johnny thought) under a dress.

Oh, The Butch said. That took more than an hour.

How can you tell?

It was a 90 minute tape.

He played some Bill Evans. His old girlfriend had insisted that, compared to her cat, who was like Cary Grant, the mature Cary Grant, The Butch's cat was just a punk in cut-offs. The Butch had objected that he was really Bill Evans, in a nice conservative business suit.

The Butch paused abruptly for a moment, in his Zoncolite painting and his talk; he realized that he had been walking in Zoncolite all this time, in his slippers. Angrily, he removed them and stood in his dark-stockinged feet on a pile of fresh, clean newspaper. Look, he apostrophized them, Ruined! You were pretty broken down; now you're even spotted with Zoncolite. He daubed at some paint on his face, and extended them for Johnny to see, as one extends one's hands, in supplication.

His old girlfriend gave them to him years ago, he explained.

Must be leather, Johnny observed.

I don't think I'm going to finish by 5, he said. I might not be able to make that movie.

Oh?

Did I tell you about the new one?

No, but something told him. He would....

I met her at the Festival, last year.

Yeah?

She’s loaded.

No kidding?

Executive Assistant to some bigshot in Hogtarry-o.

Yeah?

Grand Vizier, or something. They call him Alapaloozah. She diddles him, for Vile Rail passes, free tickets, every thing....

And you diddle her?

Well, it's complicated, he said, with ill-concealed relish.

JAZZ concerts?

Pioneers of Alienation

You got it!

So what's the bitch's name?

You won't believe it.

Tell me!

VIXEN FOXY WEASEL-THEATRE!

He'd painted himself into a corner. More Zoncolite....

She was my old girlfriend's best friend....

I just bet....

When she heard we were breaking up, she said if she could just lose 20 pounds, she could fuck me. She's been stalking me forever, just for a blow job....

Between Butch and Heaven, 20 pounds of Mexican silver....

The brush lapped wetly against the creamy walls of the spare bedroom; The Butch's roller squeaked faintly, the Zoncolite hissing and sprinkling his forearm.

I don't see how I can make it tonight though, if we're don't get this job done, he considered.

He tried painting slower.

Oh well, then she'll want me even more.

They stood back from the better-looking moulded wall.

It's crusty, The Butch said.

Yeah.

A whole tube!

It was too cummy....

It wasn't really. Johnny leaned back, admiring the thick, moulded prepuce....

*****

Now Butch could rent his apartment to somebody besides Johnny. A richer, more expensive courtesan....

*****

The McGill Housing Service supplied Butch with a nice, young geology student from London (Hoggtarryho), who rented the room for half the rent of the whole flat. They became great friends. The Butch had a girlfriend, Cliff had another. The Hassidic landlady occasionally complained about the noise on the ceiling. Cliff bought a computer, The Butch bought another, and they made their girlfriends laugh at the computer language they used, in the little notes they addressed to one another, Ode to a Transvestite, etc....

Butch and Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre had already scaled Mt. Nippletop together, holding hands. Butch taught her his favorite H.D. Thoreau maxim: The man that works by the sweat of his brow, sweats more easily than I.

Then Butch fell flat on his kisser, knocking out two front teeth. He looked more like a beaver than ever. Johnny knew. She tripped him!

The Butch had a handful of poems accepted by Scum Magazine, a computer, Cliff up the ass every night, and half a bursary still to go....

One day, he'd even get around to doing that thesis....

He'd always wanted to be a doctor....

He decided to celebrate by attending every concert at the Montreal Jazz Festival.

Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre accompanied him, in a folksy-looking granny dress, and 20 pounds of Mexican silver. They discussed klezmer music, and other subjects. They heard the stars: Ella, Sarah, and Dexter.

How they sang and played! Despite their physical handicaps! He had TWO bottles of beer before show time.

*****

They're not the same men behind the chairs
but they've the same expression on their faces
and you may be certain that they're hearing
the same hot 21st -century jazz
as the lens of an old-fashioned camera opens
and shuts at the will of the camera-man.

That one's not unlike the uncle

who embezzled the family fortune
and that one who crosses his legs and adjusts
his hands in his lap as the shutter snaps
resembles a very special friend.

With identical stares the living strain
to peer, as they themselves appear;
although they're sure they're not the same
they can't help feeling that they're not
exactly individual either.
And they can hear that jazz-age music
photographed and even mounted.

*****

The Butch had everything he wanted.

Except he really wanted to teach Dadlit instead of D-Comp, which had begun to bore even him, despite his great love of grammar and punctuation. Johnny had been teaching Dadlit at Montage U, although he, Butch, had been there ten years longer. His bursary wouldn't last forever; in fact, he was already burning through the last installment, and his thesis hadn't even been started yet. He was thinking of changing it again, to the absolute you in the poetry of K.Y. Gammon.

He would get rid of Johnny.

Then, considering how fast he could write poetry using a word processor, he might get around to writing that thesis.

He would write it in Zoncolite!

*****

Johnny glanced fondly at his Royal as he passed it on the way out the door. The red sticker on the back said Unification Typewriter Co. Of Beijing....

*****

He grew adept at rhyme
he read each learned book
until he felt the time
approach, and undertook
to see the family
he fought for poetry
and all (he thought) forsook.

At night, without a torch
he stalked across their wood
he crossed their granite porch
then waited while he stood
and knocked. One scraped a chair
one hurried to prepare
his visit, scarcely could

when, Enter poet, rest
said Sibyls of the heath,
You vanguished every test;
your ancestors bequeath
what hundreds from the land
imagined, ages planned,
a ceremonial wreath.

*****

Pioneers of Alienation

Johnny had a knapsack over his shoulder, and his keys in his right hand. He was going to Maypole City.

*****

From Montreal to Hogtown he didn't say a word. In fact, he hardly glanced up from his copy of Dadanian Short Fiction (New E. Nuff, ed.), it was so engrossing....

Her friend sat across the aisle, looking just like her: frizzled blond hair, white stockings, pink sandals, etc....

Reading Miss Minnely's Management, he caught a bit of sign language, pursed lips and limp wrists....

Perhaps he should read some Traill next, make it a Traill Mix: Catharine Parr's Female Trials (Traill's Trials, he always said), and one of her horrible sister's travelogues (Pscyho-Tours, he called them), Roughing It in My Bush or (worse) Life in the Clearings vs. my Bush.

He was roughing it himself; he was not going to trade places with the lady across the aisle....

The steward inched towards him with his cart. Johnny could see his back bent over the craning necks of passengers, symbolic of servility and submission. But he was a really nice young man with a wagon piled high with free lunch. There was such a thing as free lunch on Vile's LRC (light, rapid, comfortable) train.

Things politely (or, occasionally, rudely) accepted the clear plastic trays, and said what they wanted to drink. There was a moment of tension when he disturbed the woman's arm to unfold his table, but it passed.

He turned a page.

There was a crisis every time he opened one of Vile's hermetically-sealed containers, but he averted disaster by balancing the book in his lap. We Have To Sit Opposite. When they got to Guildwood, Mrs. Golightly had already been to her convention and back, and he was reading an even sappier number by Hugh Garner, Mrs. Taylor Takes a Trip.

He'd had Vile Rail's free lunch, but Dadlit gave him indigestion.....

In Hogtown there were complications which delayed him, but he'd been waiting so long a little longer didn't matter. The line was amoebic, magnetic; he joined it like a particle, a filing.

A little later, and a lot more: like slowly pouring the filings onto the page over the magnet, when suddenly, with a sudden fillip, they leap into the pattern, and the pattern leaps out at them....

The station drew them together, whirled them around, and spat them out, continually....

Like a giant turbine....

Before he boarded again, he was pained to see, in another line, mainly comprised of things who looked like they were going to a baseball game, a thirty-year-old in denims and a red sports-shirt; he looked exactly like an old friend he hadn't seen for years, like Deane.

Performing for his friends, right on cue, Deane suddenly leapt up to catch an imaginary ball. Johnny turned away, embarrassed, and when he looked again their lines had moved, obscuring Deane behind a pillar.

His train arrived....

All Johnny could do was watch as he ascended the stairs: his denims, his white runners....

Unconsciously, Johnny submitted his ticket to the man at the gate, who studied it, reading aloud the number of his car. Beside the dark, stifling train he repeated the number to a second conductor who pointed, down the track. He ran, thrusting his ticket into the face of the indicated man, who slowly read it, drawling Rrright!

Someone asked if he wanted smoking or non-smoking, but he said it didn't matter.

Do you smoke? the official persisted.

No.

Then would you please move to the end of the car?

He cooperated. But smoking would have been less crowded, and he hated crowds. He walked to the end of the car without finding a single empty seat, so he kicked the plate on the door and went into the next car, the passageway a brief torrid zone: it was hot in Hogtown, and it would only get hotter farther south.

Finally he found a seat beside a woman who dressed like a femme fatale in a gangster movie. Dated, but hot, she wore a lot of gold, and a veil.

The seat beside her wasn't taken, so he sat down.

*****

She liked to talk....

She was going to Maypole City. Family business. Maybe he knew the family?

Johnny realized he'd known her daughter.

She was MRS. TRIXIE SANE!

He said he taught Dadanian Literature at Montage U, where he was doing his doctorate.

He didn't bother to expatiate on the beauties of Montage U: low tuition, night courses, bumbling incompetent profs, nothing in the way of onyx or marble....

She liked to talk about Montreal before it was disfigured in '76. When Johnny explained that he lived on Parc between Fairmount and St. Viateur, she wondered why he wanted to live in that old neighborhood....

He would have felt odd, extolling to her the beauties of Montreal apartments besides low rent: original unrenovated antique fixtures, hardwood floors, octagonal tiles, molded nouveau riche ceilings, naked vestibule fanlight cherubim, onyx and marble (disintegrating) everywhere....

She'd been born two streets north-east, knew what he liked, not why.

She gazed out the window, at the lights at a crossing, mistaking them for Maypole City. Glencoe. He'd made the same mistake, a hundred times.

She said in '76 they'd started buying guns and dynamite. Politics screwed. The same thing was happening in Hogtown. She had a daughter. Respectable working girl, if he knew what she meant....

He did, better than herself....

Then she started talking about empowerment, calling herself sex-trade worker. She was even getting into social work....

She laughed. When Mayor Houde let crime in, he meant business. The Normandie Roof! Dancing! They had fun....

Those places were torn down now.

Had he been to The Little Munich? Why had he come to Montreal, then? He should go! An om-pa-pah band, on a revolving stage! Say he was looking for somebody, and have fun.

Like mother, like daughter....

*****

He lapsed into unconsciousness. Thinking of Dadlit. What he was leaving. Where he was going.

Souwestole!

John Richardson's wasteland. Borders, opposites, doubles.

Deane on the platform. The masochistic rethinking of the past. History as trauma. The future the worse remake of a bad movie.

Richardson's great themes....

Wacousta on the forest floor with sex-crazed captives. Where Johnny was conceived....

The long flashback into the phthisic heart of nothing.

The worsening spiral of twisted theories and evil practices, culminating in the classroom.

Vix College....

Kinky voyeuristic poetics. Elaborately staged for the prurient provincial peep-show. Skin for the Zoncolite Girl. The blinding flash of a Rube Goldberg epiphany when everyone blacks out....

Norrie Freed....

P/Bigge Shitte Allwood....

The National Literature....

Crap....

O, for Montreal and its naked hoofers!

If anyone thinks they can do it well....

You can show me just what you know....

She was saying he'd get along anywhere; the perfect gentleman. She obviously couldn't read his mind....

Praetorius couldn't have put her in his act, like The Three Keatons....

By the way, would he mind if she ate an apple?

Of course not, he said, the perfect gentleman.

He wanted her to....

*****

Was that MA standing in the shadow, while he helped the retired hooker cross the track?

She called him when he reached the other side, and he waved. She didn't smile. He deposited the Montrealer's luggage at her feet, and she hugged a woman she said was her sister. He bowed, and introduced himself. He indicated Ma, under the eaves; they paused, nodding to her, but she didn't step forward. He said good-bye to the show girls, approached Ma, and shook hands.

She led him to her car, a red compact shaded by the tree that overhung the fence. She automatically opened the trunk, but he immediately shut it again, because he only had his bag. She leaned over to unlock his door.

It was hot. The drought ruined the crops.

Times were bad, when Ma worried about weather. As a girl she'd trampled a corn-field, playing tag. He watched her drive.

She squinted. She worried about vision. She'd worked for an optometrist. She got free glasses.

When she drove him to school on her way to work, and the sun shone in their eyes, he got the prescription sunglasses out of her purse, and handed them to her. Now her glasses were light-sensitive. He watched her. The lens darkened....

He'd walked around several large cities; he was amazed how small Maypole City was, but the cornerstone of the old domed Carnegie library in front of the modern building, and the gas street-lamp that had been converted to Hydro, seemed light-years away....

She forgot and drove straight into the narrow garage. She had to back up, to let him out....

Her flat was the main floor of a clapboard house. The original residents had owned a hardware store on nearby King Street; the fixtures, the flanges around the lights, predated Hydro....

*****

She handed him his sandwich on a plate, with a napkin. She reminded him from the kitchen, to put the napkin under the plate when he set it down.

They sat away from the noise of the air-conditioner in the dining-room. He studied a Currier and Ives picture over the buffet....

Winter at The Falls....

She didn't eat; she was always on a diet. He sat on the sofa and regarded the familiar things: a marble-topped table, a commode, some French-Provincial chairs.

I've decided I have to move, was all she said.

*****

$CAMH....
And STATE CAPITALISTS'
FASCIST TV
present
BELA HIRELING
and his side-kick
MAX THE BUTCHER
and a carefully
prescreened
assortment of
handpicked
FLUNKIES
on Mental Hell
POSTER BOYS that
MADE IT - whatever
that is.

Unfortunately
they couldn't AFFORD
the regularly scheduled
POSTER GIRL
Silken Lauman AGAIN
this EVENING
and her UNDERSTUDY
had a RELAPSE....

So they got
JOHNNY BOY
to come and tell them
his LIFE STORY....

Thing Street Asylum

Part ONE
of a SHORT-LIVED SERIES....

They got him CHEAP,
he needed the MONEY
even worse than
$CAMH....

*

All right
even though....

You're obviously NOT
all right....

Let's
TALK....

How'd it
HAPPEN....

How did you become
JOHNNY BOY....

(FUCKING
LOONY....)

Couldn't we find SOMEONE ELSE
to INTERVIEW?!

*

Once upon a
TIME....

In a shithole called
MAYPOLE, ONTARIO....

I had a
FAMILY....

FATHER was a DYPSO
MOTHER was a JUNKIE,
BROTHER and SISTER
really GOT IT ON
but I never CHANGED my NAME
till they became
TEACHERS and
BANKERS....

NORMAL in other
WORDS,
although I knew
they would always be ROTTEN
like ME....

Once you achieve THAT
ROTTENNESS
you NEVER really

Pioneers of Alienation

LOSE it,
and WE
were BORN TO IT....

I
DIGRESS....

Where WAS
I?

MAYPOLE CITY
1970....

HELL!

J. Fraser MUSTARD says KIDS
need a VILLAGE....

Ideally a
MATRIARCHY....

FREEDONIA?!

Run by MARGARET DUMONT McCAIN
and MY MOTHER....

A DOWAGER and
a JUNKIE....

The DOWAGER wants to SPREAD
PIZZAPHRENIA....

The JUNKIE wants to MARRY
ELI LILLY!

I needed a VILLAGE
MATRIARCHY....

Like a HOLE
in the HEAD....

I wanted out of MINE
so BAD....

I KILLED
MYSELF....

Of course, I
FAILED at THAT, TOO....

But not for WANT of
TRYING....

Still, SUICIDE ATTEMPTS are very
TRANSFORMING....

I heartily recommend them to natives
of SMALL DADADANIAN SATRAPIES....

You DIE, or you
SURVIVE....

Thing Street Asylum

Which is what it's ALL
ABOUT....

Either WAY, at LEAST you're NOT
NORMAL any more....

However, if you're NOT
a MURDERER, it isn't....

For WANT of
TRYING....

I was on the RUN
from MYSELF....

Keep your FRIENDS CLOSE,
your ENEMIES CLOSER....

But THIS
was RIDICULOUS....

*

You see EVERYONE.....

If only STATE CAPITALISTS
had been AROUND....

We'd have DRUGGED THIS
FREAK!

ELI LILLY would never have
let JOHNNY BOY DEVELOP
into a DISGRACE
to the DADANIAN FOLK....

Not merely an EXPERIMENT that did
NOT WORK OUT,
a CATASTROPHE for
MENTAL HYGIENE....

Take a GOOD LOOK
EVERYBODY,
at this
MONSTROSITY....

No, STATE CAPITALISTS
would NEVER LET THIS HAPPEN....

He's always so ANGRY
and uses TOO MANY CAPITALS....

It's like he's SHOUTING
ALL THE TIME....

Maybe we should put him on
QUETIAPINE,
yes, that's a
GOOD ONE....

If he's not SCHIZO already

he'll be after QUETIAPINE....

Yes, QUETIAPINE
Is GOOD FOR STATE CAPITALISTS!

Hail, HAIL QUETIAPINE!

*****

The Butch found out. Johnny was leaving town for a few days to visit his folks, so he volunteered to look after his mail. For several days there'd been nothing: a gas bill, a hydro bill, etc.

Then a big brown manilla enveloped arrived, with the return address of one of the funding agencies.

Eureka!

Sorry to do this to yuh, JOHNNY!

Butch tore frantically at the envelope, oinking and squealing, the excuse barely formulated, in the uneven free-verse strophes that he preferred: He thought it contained dead / Line material. He was delighted to discover within it a complete set of Johnny's transcripts, as well as copies of all the letters in his file, the entire contents of which Johnny had obviously wanted to examine privately.

Now Butch could, too.

Johnny had been spying on their profs! Those shits....

There was even a letter from Rube Goldberg. He said Charles Churchill's formal verse satires reminded him of Blackadder!

*****

Rube Goldberg crapping solid meat in his plywood cell. The buxom Zoncolite girl from her fly-flecked poster. Peering over his beefy shoulder. Where his wiener wasn't. As he frantically filled a dog-eared steno. Just as they came to him. Long, firm periods.

Coiling at intervals around sporadic commas like folds in his guts. Like segments of tapeworm.

Twelfth installment of The Sewage.

He'd just completed The Water Works....

Rube felt something behind him....

At the end of the course he asked Johnny if he wanted to fuck the Zoncolite Girl. In front of the whole class. If that didn't shut up that faggot, nothing would.

Now her big tits and white vinyl cowgirl boots inspired his lyrical description of Matt Door's astronaut grand-daughter spreading her legs in space....

At night, on Thing Street, Hogtown, Matt Door looks up and sees her....

He sees Trixie's TWAT!!!

> Come January the dogs are in tip-top condition, and everybody's ready to put training into practice. George has a busy time of it, meeting the demands of Eskimo dog-trainer and Anglican priest but, in his own words, I believe in livin' me life to the fullest: spiritually, mentally, and physically. Whether I'm with me dog-team or me flock, or just putting me feet up, scratchin' me ballocks....

Rube smacked the Philco with a reeking palm. The volume rose. Ahhhh, that's more like it. Highbrow Dadanian Kulchaw.

*****

Butch slapped the top of his clock radio, his sticky palm in the vicinity of the speaker. It barked like an Anglican sled-dog, after a steroid injection....

That was better....

The Butch found an FM station which broadcast nothing but the soundtrack of the Milquetoast Broadcasting Corporation's TV channel. At first he knew what the soundtrack represented, even the more fantastic commercials. But the longer he listened to just the radio, the more he forgot the images that went with the words. The old sponsors were dropped and replaced with new ones, whose logos he'd never seen. It was what Babyface called an alienating experience....

Thing Street Asylum

Dadanian content was so uplifting....

It represented the vanguard of Dadanian intelligence....

Alfie Listen Listor (Butch imagined a big bottle of mouthwash), hair coiffed in the manner of the philandering Abbe Liszt, voice thoughtfully suggestive of thoughtful suggestions, on Notions conducted his fellow Dadanians through one 12-part trivialization after another....

*****

Johnny heard the spring in the screen door, the key in the lock, the doctor asking in a deep voice if anyone was home. Ma answered in the bright, youthful voice she reserved for DOCTORS.

Johnny rose from his place on the sofa and walked into the vestibule; the doctor's face was thinner, his head balder, making him look even more like a skull. His grip was like steel.

The doctor asked Johnny how he was doing. Like enquiring about a new treatment for cancer.

Or cancer itself, thought Johnny.

So you've finally found a place for yourself....

*****

Summer arrived sullen after set-backs and delays. The air was hot and humid, the sun unnaturally bright, like a feverish eye. Johnny spent the day wandering in the southern part of Montreal, along Notre Dame.

His main objective was the Salvation Army Thrift Store a few blocks west of Guy, but on the way he saw part of St. Henri too, and the harborfront.

He passed the O'Keefe Brewery.

In Hogtown, it was Molson's.

Breweries were always close to water.

The long plants and warehouses in dusty red brick, the machinery murmuring over the hum of traffic, the skyline a jumble of old churches and new banks....

Montage....

The mirage of a medieval town moated by rails, an ugly humped crossing like a draw-bridge and Windsor Station the arched and crenelated castle. Like the vision of Hogtown from the Badhearse viaduct; only there the impression was newer, the jumble less extreme.

The Salvation Army was the same, not just because it was located in a slum near water, but because there was the same assortment of cracked 78s, dusty paperbacks, reeling TVs, blaring toneless radios, and impossible as is....

Reality was as is....

Even the woman on cash was identical to her Thing Street counterpart. Florid, faded, with a worn trace of Scottish accent. However, the as is was on a separate downstairs level all its own, as if the nearer to Hell the better. The only place approaching this jumble, that was not in fact just another Salvation Army as is basement, was the basement of his Eastern Block landlady's house on Thing Street....

The skyline of Montage....

He found an old machine for 5 dollars, heavy as artillery. The man at the counter was English; he assured him it was complete.

He remarked that it sure was muggy down here, wasn't it?

He might have meant the whole harbourfront, but he only meant the basement.

The machine in a green paratrooper's bag slung over his shoulder, Johnny walked east on Notre Dame, till he came to a very clean-looking restaurant where a big shiny window displayed antiques and other decorations: old black and white photos, a spinning wheel, a phonograph....

The sign said Coffee 50 Cents. He hoped it wasn't another antique....

He went to the counter but the waitress told him to sit down, she would bring it. When she came over with his coffee in a Styrofoam cup, he asked if he could pay her now.

She said certainly, and cheerfully informed him that the second cup was on the house, so be sure to have more.

She just wanted to keep some things in the place, for show....

He didn't stay, but left a tip. She didn't bother to pick it up....

He explored the castle across the tracks.

*****

Pioneers of Alienation

Now that the regular passenger service had been transferred to Central Station, Windsor Station was no more than a suburban bus stop. The monumental corridors went nowhere. Things used to go there to go somewhere else; now they went there just to go there.

It was an attraction, for show.

A few middle-aged couples strolled about the hall, women in cotton blouses, men in canvas jackets. Johnny had entered from Ste. Antoine Street, which must have been the back door, because through the bank of glass doors ahead he could see a bus parked in the street. At his end of the hall was a statue of a dying soldier, supported by a bronze angel.

At the end of one of the corridors that went nowhere he saw a sign with an arrow indicating the direction to the employment office. Maybe he should apply....

He descended the stairs to the level of Ste. Antoine, remarking again the monumental character of the building, the stairs broad at first then narrower around the corner, for the theatrically long last flight broken by several landings, like the basins of a large formal fountain.

It had run dry.

*****

A news reporter from a radio station
offered her radio like a decoration
in case I chose before the customary
arrangements of Mount Royal Cemetery
crepe, flowers, wicker, plastic, powder, plaster
a statement from the scene of the disaster.
I didn't want to stand on ceremony
so with a gesture, waved away her Sony.
For Thornton Davidson on the Titanic
the prospect was a splinter, mid-Atlantic -
and Charles M. Hays was similarly chosen.
the son-in-law and father both fast-frozen.
For those who keyed emotion in abatement
in bad shape was a stroke of understatement.

Thing Street Asylum

Pioneers of Alienation:
Part II: Rude Civil Servants

From the clouds, it resembled a giant stump lot.

Flying west across the continent. Johnny was impressed. Dah-dan-i-ah!

It only looked bigger from the ground.

Like an epiphany in a jerry-built Rube Goldberg fairy tale. It came to him.

I gotta get outa here, he said.

Yes? Yes? What did you say? Sonny! She bent over him solicitously. With a steely glint in here eye. Shark fins flashing. His speech like drops of blood in a prehensile inland sea....

The Dadanian Shield!

Horror! The trash-can lid of the North. Keeping the lid on things. The Dadanian Role.

Maybe Wilf got it wrong. Maybe the 20th century did not belong to us after all. We submit. Now that it's over. Maybe the Chinese had a better claim to it. They were certainly more numerous.

But the garbage! The garbage belongs to us. Stuffing it down abandoned mine shafts. Polluting marshes. Denuding valleys. Busy beavers. Radiation-proof trailer trucks ripping along specially-built super-highways all the way from Vegas, Detroit, New York City.

That was only the imported trash. There was plenty of the loco home-grown. To which we rightly had first claim. Right of first rejection. Not that we ever turned anything down. Look at it all.

Novels short-stories travel sketches diaries epics sonnets lyrics haiku songs plays masques miscellanies reviews essays retrospectives special-issues commemoratives, etc. We bought it. Like Bri-ex.

That wasn't the first time! Dad Lit stuffs abandoned mine-shafts along with all the other Fool's Gold. The real thing eludes us. Talent!

Stupid Mariposans, Johnny said.

Young man! Did you just call me stupid???

*****

Lethe Bridge. The river snaking through it between high banks like the puckered lips of a badly infected wound.

Doubtless prettier from the ground.

So, where were the dinosaurs? Johnny wanted to know. Hiding? Not used to airplanes yet? Give 'em another million years. They'd be back! Only Johnny wasn't thinking of sticking around so long.

Prettier from the ground? A shit-house. Even from the air. Prettier if you crashed and died and couldn't see it any more.

It was the ugliest place on Earth.

*****

He'd been Out West. He was 24 years old. He was well educated, with an interest in a trust estate amounting to from ten to fifteen thousand dollars, a brother in Hamilton and an attorney, Mr. Chadwick, to represent him in Toronto.

His habits of life were irregular, the alleged causes of his illness being intemperance and sexual excess. Single and childless, he suffered from delusions of being worth millions and having numerous wives. He'd been unfairly treated in Prince Albert, where he had a large landed interest. He was about to start for Egypt with a military contingent that he'd been organizing himself, intending to equip it with bows and arrows, when he was wrongfully imprisoned....

A letter from his lawyer to the doctor dated August 21, 1882, accompanied a letter from his mother. (The lawyer correctly assumed that the doctors read patients' mail before deciding whether to let them read it themselves.) Mrs. Palmer expressed shock at the news of his illness. She had remarked her son's mania for land in his last letter, and regretted that it might all be lost. She hoped that he wasn't confined because that sort of thing always had such a bad effect on him, as his immense stock of animal strength and spirits required such constant air and exercise to keep him all right. A line has been drawn in the margin beside this passage, as if the doctor read it and took it very seriously.

His mother attributed his illness to a combination of overwork at College and the effect of a serious injury he sustained from a violent blow playing hurley. This seemed somehow to alter the shape of his head and also accounted for the scarred eye which it nearly destroyed. His condition was aggravated by bad company, especially considering his penchant to marry every pretty girl he met.

One of his letters, probably from the period immediately preceding his first confinement, is preserved in his first file. It is addressed to Gentlemen and Ladies, with a small figure 2 over Gentlemen and a similar figure 1 over Ladies, as if Palmer had thought it more polite to reverse the order. The hand-writing, which is probably Palmer's, is strong and clear, with minor corrections inserted here and there.

It reads like an advertisement. Perhaps the most striking thing about it is its enthusiastic tone, and a related tendency to veer off on a tangent, as if the enthusiasm or energy did not come from the subject matter but from something in Palmer himself, and more or less vented itself on the nearest available object. In discussing Prince Albert Palmer enjoyed describing the town as the Future Capital of Alberta, a great division or province. The town had great physical advantages from being only 23 miles from the Forks, whence it would derive all the commerce it could manage and a great deal more besides.

With a fervour that sounds like an exaggerated parody of Frontier Spirit, Palmer describes the two gigantic Rivers navicable [sic] in a westerly direction. He enthuses over the thousand miles of the South Saskatchewan with its tributaries, the Red and Belly Rivers, and its continuation, the Boar River. He anticipates the day when steamers like the Lilly Northcote and the Northwest will navigate the North Branch past Edmonton to Fort Calgary, at the base of those grand hills the Rockies.

Rhapsodizing over the products of the sub Arctic forest, Palmer digresses to discuss his friend, Alex Loudoun's lost potatoes at Battleford: his entire crop with the exception of about (12) twelve bushels being frozen in the ground; he has to thank his own carelessness for that. Even the potato is ennobled by Palmer, as that Irish-loved vegetable.

The second of Palmer's letter's dates from his second confinement. Palmer begins by asking one Annie if she has been lonely without him. Claiming to miss her very much, he hopes to see her in a month, when they will presumably be married, to part no more in this life. Get your truso ready, darling.

He claims to have been detained on business which he will have to conclude, first. Meanwhile, he begs her, keep your spirits, love. and remember that the course of true love never did yet run smooth.

The letter concludes with a pastiche of similar cliches and sentiments: your image is engraved on my heart, and your name, sweet Annie, on my arm; O, you Daisey; you are dearer to me than wealth, etc....

That Palmer expressed himself in cliches, and that he expressed such cliches to many women, does not mean that his emotions had to have been unreal or shallow. Palmer's language acquires a certain pathos given the context: an addressee who almost certainly cared nothing for him and probably barely knew him, and who never received the letter anyway, as it was intercepted and filed away unread till now by anyone exce[t his doctor and a lawyer.

One gets the impression of a young man with the dangerous combination of a strong nature and a judgement impaired by organic injury. One might also suspect, probably as a consequence of the two, the onslaught of incurable syphilis. Mrs. Palmer hoped that some good experienced attendant.... who would also be a kindly companion in a healthy country place, would restore her son's health. One might also perceive, in the texts themselves, the emergence of a tragic opposition between the young man and the open spaces he has such affinity and enthusiasm for, and his destiny in Thing Street Asylum.[20]

His file contained numerous receipts for fresh fruit, and a bill for repairs to his guitar.

*****

One side of the river: downtown. A gigantic Worthless World. Monumental compared to everything else: a bus shelter, a Burger Thang, a Donut Hole....

The other side: suburbia. Instead of a giant Worthless World a giant Hacienda-Rancho, Sancho-Panzy, Rio-Verde, Villa-Style Bungalow. Like King Richards's Fuck Palace. But bigger, uglier. A real tasteless pad. The Dean's house....

Dozens of slave-cabins huddled around it. Ribbons of greasy smoke straggling from crooked chimneys. A nauseous stench invaded the cabin. Faculty!!!

O, Johnny!

Bigger than Worthless World. Bigger even than the Dean's Fuck Palace. A giant railroad trestle towered over everything. Lethe Bridge!

Its slats cast shadows over the whole city. Like it was in jail. Or dead, its rotting flesh leaving it a skeleton.

Johnny'd read about it. In the Bulletin. How the suicide rate got higher out west till your reached Lethe Bridge. Then dropped off again.

[20] In his report for 1908, Clarke asserts that "the bare facts are suggestive enough; an analysis of them makes us marvel at the complacency of those who calmly accuse us of a want of patriotism in decrying certain kinds of immigration from the old country" (1908, 7). He combines virulent ad hominem attack with economic snobbery, accusing the "pseudopatriotic enthusiast" of "building up beautiful philanthropic plans which are to enable the slum weakling to shake off the stigmata of degeneracy in the free air of the prairies" (1908, 7).

Thing Street Asylum

Literally.....

Because they were dead already....

Suicides from every province. The perfect place. A really magnificent drop. Stupendous....

Plus the loco home-grown. Plenty of those. Johnny found out soon enough. Families turned out with their pets. The cops gave lectures. They put up a park underneath, with a grandstand right beside the droppings.

Why, it was the embarkation point of choice among the terminally self-employed. Something about the nearly perfect Golgotha symmetry of the hills on either side. The big ditch below. Native traditions of auto-genocide, even before the white man.

Must always have been rather depressing....

Now there was a museum. A Coroner's Office. On the premises. Convenient for next of kin. Death Certificate easier than a visa. A green card to the hereafter.

Suddenly the wind lurched and for a split second Johnny thought they were all going to smash right into Dadanian Pacifier Railway's only Wonder of the World. Built by Chinese labor.

Only those coolies must have charmed their monument. For a second blast hurled Johnny up, up away.

There it was! Protruding from the hill-side like an unburied coffin. Lethe Bridge U!

O, why did I ever come to this place? Johnny whined. Even if I do get out of here alive. How will I ever forget it?

The Lethe Bridge Air-O-Drome made him think of a single stop on the GO line back in Hogtown. Just two or three commuters. Not exactly the Hub of the Universe.

We're ten miles outside of town, a pert-looking young woman told him. Looked like a Cow Girl. Not that he'd ever seen one up close before.

Ugh. Better take a cab I guess.

I think so, Cow Girl affirmed. Maybe we can round one up.

No, that's okay. I'll do my own cab rustlin'.

It's no trouble.

Need practice. Cab rustlin's a little rusty.

Wait'll you see the cab.

Johnny sauntered over to the bank of pay-phones. It would take them a few minutes to unload the cat. Thought he'd practice moseying....

He needed more than a cab. A place to stay.... A Hotel.... At least they'd probably put up with his cat. After all. It was The West. With all those cows, what was a cat or two? There was a lot Johnny didn't know.

He saw at a glance in the yellow pages that all the motels were on one street. All three of them. Guess I know where to start, he thought. He went back to the luggage office and picked up his cat. Stretch was in his third or fourth revolution on the conveyor belt, getting dizzy.

*****

Johnny slung his green paratrooper's bag over his shoulder and turned to watch the departing cab. He picked up Stretch in his green carrying case and headed for the first motel on the strip.

Ye-es? A man in dusty blue overalls eyed Johnny and his cat. Especially the latter.

How much for a single room?

He tapped a sign on the wall of his dusty office. It said NO PETS.

He's cleaner than most kids.

Well, all right. So long as you keep him in the cage. All the time.

You keep the kids in a cage?

Don't reckon I....

Forget it. Johnny strode out. Making the door-bell tinkle behind him. Fuck him. Overalls looked like he was going to call the cops. Some weirdo in town.

Fortunately the next place on Coolie Drive took him in. At the front desk. Fat guy in a vest. Seemed OK. Not that Johnny was fussy.

Stretch felt like a fucking tiger. Angry too. Cooped up in that crate all day. Half crazed after the conveyor. Looking pretty sour in his private cat slammer. Probably had to go too.

Johnny put the cat down in the bathroom and headed for the enormous drug store the sign of which loomed over the facades of main street like a killer ape. The parking lot was as big as a prairie. It was empty.

Kitty litter. Disposable crapper. Kibble. When he got back and set up the toilet and opened the carrying case the cat shot out like a prospector staking a claim. Digging frantically.

I shit on it too.

*****

Pioneers of Alienation

Workman wanted to dispense with the term General Paralysis for a disease which did not involve genuine paralysis until its very final stages (On Paresis II, 358). He described, with considerable dramatic flair, how in its early stages what he calls Paresis is marked by symptoms radically different from its end:

> The budding subject of our so called general Paralysis is the very antithesis of a paralytic. He is all life, all energy, all self-assurance, all speculativeness, all fearlessness, and all hopefulness. He feels stronger, more healthful, more youthful, than he ever before felt. (357)

Workman obviously savoured the discrepancy between the patient's appearance of health and the reality; he revelled in the sheer drama of the disease, the marked contrast between appearance and reality and the height of the fall of the victim, the irony of public misapprehension and ignorance, the mystery of professional wisdom:

> it will be found of frequent obtainance, that paretics have been men of unusual mental force and grasp. Some of them may have made achievements that have astonished their quiet, cautious, neighbours; but this astonishment has finally been eclipsed by one far stranger, and far sadder. I feel sure that there is not one who now hears me, (but more especially not one of maturer years), who has not witnessed mental dethronements of the sad character here alluded to. (358)

More precisely, he relishes his privileged ability to see disease when the patient's family and friends, and not seldom his medical adviser, share in the delusion (357). Paresis occasioned a triumph of medical lore and experience over the deceptive charms of youth if not youth itself, gratifying to the older physician who remarks like a baleful epicure the dozens of such athletes that have been sent to him, ticketed as most promising cases (357), but marked by him for something else....

*****

Finding a pad was hard. The cat was a big obstacle. Albertans didn't like animals. Except to eat. Or wear on their feet. Liked to wheel and deal. Make money.

At Coolie College he met the secretary. Pieta Jettstreme. She tried to sell him some Tupperware. She'd just bought a bungalow on the other side of the ditch. By the Dean's palace. Of course. Having a little trouble making ends meet. Maybe he'd like to donate to the coffee fund?

He gave her fifty bucks.

*****

No pets?

It's the law!

Yeah? Well I'm going to organize the pet owners. We'll change the law. Then we'll sue you for discrimination!

Good luck! He slammed the door of his little stucco-brick condo duplex. So far no luck. Every apartment building had a kind of No Smoking sign. Only with an animal where the cigarette should be. Surrounded by a heavy red circle with a slash through it.

Riding around the 'burb in the back of Lethe Bridge Transit, he spotted a For Rent sign. In front of another condo identical to the one he'd just been rejected by. He wrote down the number.

By the time he got back downtown he was hungry. He'd noticed a Chinese restaurant across the park from King Kong Pharmaworld. The only place in town where there were any trees. A single enormous crow followed him from bough to bough. Hurling abuse. A grizzled old man wearing aviator sun-glasses crossed the park in the opposite direction. Looked at Johnny. At the bird. At Johnny.

Don't seem to want you around, he said.

The realtor was short and stocky. Wore reading glasses. Talked fast. Said it was all right to have a cat. So long as he paid a damage deposit. In fact he wanted that immediately. Otherwise they'd probably never get it. He'd had some bad experiences.

Upon completion of the final inspection, Johnny had to sign a promise that he wouldn't even pound a nail in the imitation wood-paneled walls, but the realtor generously offered his verbal consent to hang a few pictures. They didn't have to do everything by the book. It was The West!

After the man had gone, Johnny closed the door and lay down for a minute on the beige broadloom wall to wall. Nothing. No traffic. Only the wind singing in the power lines, banging the garbage cans.

*****

Thing Street Asylum

That wasn't the wind pounding on Johnny's door. The cat had been sleeping beside him. On the palate he'd made out of a blanket and some clothing. It took off. Into the closet or under the stove. Who knew?

He slowly rose from the floor. Limped down the long hallway. Groggy. Half asleep. On the tiny concrete porch lurked an enormous cop. Very young. Blond. Beady blue eyes. Piggy eyes. Lady-killer pencil mustache.

Johnny opened the door. Gingerly. The cop was nervous. Jumpy.

You live here?

Why, yes.

What's your name?

Johnny.

Had any pills today, Johnny?

Now that was a poser. He considered asking him if vitamins counted, but instead told him that he frankly didn't think it was any of his business.

If you don't cooperate I have the authority to enter, and rip your place apart.

Yeah? My Realtor will have something to say to you. Johnny pointed to the sign still prominent on his parched front lawn. Identical to scores of others along the street. The cop had pushed his beefy torso far enough around the jamb to see that Johnny didn't have much stuff of his own to rip apart. He had a point.

Then he told him some story. How somebody had placed a 9-1-1 call from his address. An overdose! There'd obviously been a mistake.

Obviously.

*****

At the depot. Waiting in front of Worthless World for the Lethe Bridge Transit Commission. A middle-aged native woman staggers up to him.

Hey Honk! What you think about self-government?

Well. In principle....

Yes or no. Honk.

*****

At first Dr. Clarke appeared almost benign when he argued that the great 19th-century Metis leader, Louis Riel, should never have been executed for treason. It soon becomes obvious, however, that with the authority that he thought rightfully belonged to psychiatry, he would never have allowed a Riel to exist in the first place.

Writing 20 years after Riel's execution, Clarke depicted him as an atavism, one that should have been an impossibility at as late a period as 1885 (379).[21] He attributed Riel's unlikely occurrence to the primitive character of his things, whom he considered ignorant and superstitious, while suffering from inexcusable wrongs (379). But while they are the appropriate raw but inflammable material for the fire of Riel's fanaticism, Clarke attributes Riel's alleged sickness equally to the austerity of the region he came from, the lonely prairies of the North-West (Part II, 23), where cases of paranoid delusion naturally tend to develop. Among well-educated things, Clark assures us (II, 23) Riel would have been detected and confined, shut up from society as long as he lived (22).[22]

*****

Yes, and no. He was getting nervous. She was big. A few wild strands of shiny black hair fell over her Foster Grants.

Hey! You're cute.

She'd been drinking. The alky....

Buy me another! She dragged him toward a seedy-looking tavern across the street. Giant plywood cacti climbing the facade. Beside a pawn shop with western accessories in the window. Her belt was missing.

---

[21] C.K. Clarke, "A Critical Study of the Case of Louis Riel," Part 1, Queen's Quarterly 12 (April, 1905): 379-88; Part 2, Queen's Quarterly 13 (July, 1905): 15-26.

[22] In Riel's subsequent trial the rest of society at least according to Dr Clarke, by not acknowledging what Riel is, become it themselves (ie. “mad”); only a few brave alienists, rightly finding Riel mad, "stand by their guns in the midst of a torrent of abuse." The mixed metaphors convey Clarke's own mixed feelings of being at once morally and intellectually stronger and politically out-numbered, besieged and victimized even when on the attack (and on the winning side). Ironically enough, it is an analogous position of moral superiority and physical defeat that Clarke's colleagues, and symbolically Clarke himself, offer Riel an "opportunity" to exchange for clemency and "life," provided that he recognize their jurisdiction and accept their diagnosis of himself as "mad." He criticizes Riel for refusing to be "saved" at the cost of what he himself might have been reluctant to pay.

They wrestled. She tried to get him on her back. To carry him into the tavern. A trophy!

Up in the tree-tops, that fucking bird.

Caw! Caw! Urging her on. Working in tandem!

The Trickster Spirit! Nanagook!!! Where was that bus?

Suddenly a dusty Datsun screeched to a halt. The passenger door popped open. The driver leaned over. A medium-sized kid. Short-cropped blond hair. Pince-nez.

Want a lift?

Johnny regarded Pocahontas. Did he ever!

I've seen you around. With your book. Sort of makes you stand out.

Yeah? Noticed, already.

It's a small place.

Yeah. If that's all you have to do to get noticed.

I suppose noticing comes naturally. The Chief of Police's my father.

Johnny swallowed.

So what were you doing anyway?

Waiting. For the bus!

Looked like you were getting into trouble.

Probably. It wasn't hard. The driver wore a faded white T-shirt and shorts. Nice shoulders. Smooth legs. Sneakers. Sockless! Easy to get into trouble around here.

You some kind of writer?

Close. I'm the new English teacher.

Where'd they find.... I mean, I thought so. You must be April's replacement. All this while they were soaring down one side of a gigantic ditch, up the other.

Johnny noticed a bunch of things gathered under Dadanian Pacifier's wonderful bridge.

Another one! The driver didn't even look....

April?

Yeah. She was my teacher.

Oh.

It was like sitting between rows of moving facades. Like backstage props in a theatre. All the streets named after U.S. institutions. Harvard Rhombus. Princeton Pentangle. They just kept going. Till Johnny said, Stop!

By the way. My name's Tommy, the driver told him, from the curb.

*****

Johnny got used to going to the Sally Anne every day. Furnishing his pad.

Sometimes he stopped at the department. Carrying armloads of things. Pieta watched him. She would intercept him on his way to his little office down the hall. Wanted to see what he'd found.

Johnny met Tommy there a few times. Outfitting his own pad. Overlooking the park where the Chinese restaurant was. The trees. He said there was always a lot of action down there at night. Natives. Parties. Fights! A happening place. Johnny supposed it was. Relatively speaking.

Most of the things working at the Sally Anne were professors' kids. The tenured fucks donated their stuff. Johnny found designer clothing. Movado watches. High-tech kitchen equipment. Heavy expensive furniture. The best! Even an enormous antlered chandelier. Throw-aways from the Dean's Fuck Palace.

Tommy with one of his friends. Daughter of the Chair of Spengler Studies. Sitting on an especially ugly pink sofa. Crossing one smooth leg over the other.

See? If you had one of these, you could put it in your livingroom and sit on it. Like this.

I wouldn't. Like that.

*****

Maybe it was all the used clothes Bruce worked among. After he left the P/Bigge Bank and his boyfriend, the one with the ear-ring, got him the only job he was suited for....

The T-shirts whose pits stank of so many different brands of under-arm deodorant. So many kinds of soap. The white dress-shirts, brown and crusty there. The different neck-styles. Crew-neck. Boat. The unbuttoned throats of polo shirts. All intimately suggestive of the hair-lines of things who had originally worn and donated them, or who had died and left them to grieving relatives to donate or, in lonely or at least solitary cases, to lawyers. Leaving everything to the imagination.

Porko was so short that immediately upon passing through the automatic doors his vision was filled by merchandise, the contents of the entire store.

Thing Street Asylum

The music was buoyant 60s pop. Truly a department-store setting. As a recorded voice repeatedly interrupted the Beach Boys, or Simon and Garfunkel, to remind him.

The Cripps and the Sally Anne didn't offer music and certainly not a recorded voice to remind him how pleasant and covenient it all was.

Just like a department store. Almost. Like Eatone's. Before they went bankrupt. Or Simpson''s.

Just like they were shoppers.

Like they had jobs. Made money. Real money. Not Dadollars, loonies and toonies, for Elmer Fudds and other national character-types to sell Bugs carrots for.

REAL MONEY! Like hadn't been seen north of the 49th parallel in decades. To buy REAL GOODS with. That (who knows?) you might have made working. Despite what that recorded voice was now saying. That millions of Dadanians' labor would be wasted if you weren't buying this crap. Their horrible used garbage. Their offal.

What about one's own labor? What about oneself? Most of them were dead!

Porko wanted to know. Like he gave a shit. Like they were real shoppers. Paying customers.

They paid all right. Dawn to dusk. By living. If you could call it that. By being THEMSELVES....

A country of bums. Unfortunately, with a lot of trees and things. Otherwise they couldn't have survived. To run around telling everybody what sports they were. To corrupt the honest races of the world by inviting them over and making bums out of them too. To kick them out again, as soon as they were successful. To brag that the present century was their private property. Then when it was nearly over, and hadn't amounted to more than two World Wars, to claim they meant the next one....

Without them the world would have been a kinder, gentler place....

Fuck, said Porko. Who needs the World anyway? We'll kick Earth's ass! We'll send our peace-keepers over and beat it up. We'll send the Mounties (by permission Disney Inc.). We'll send our Foreign Secretary, Floyd Axelworthy. The Conqueror of Beijing. We'll send Grand Vizier Alapaloozah!

Selling those useless nuclear reactors took statesmanship. Even had to loan them the money. Interest-free! Took brains! As well as a pretty face.

He even made them sign a piece of paper:

> Promise! Swear to god:
>
> Never ever to use a single devastatingly powerful particle that we guarantee all our reactors to be splendidly capable of producing in superabudance, in any of those perfectly compatible megaton bombs the cheerful alacrity of the Chinese authorities for which we readily acknowledge, appreciate, anticipate, and accept. Taiwan notwithstanding.
>
> I do!
>
> Love,
> Bugsy (Segal)
>
> P.S. What's up, doc?

*****

Johnny passed down the long corridor to his cell. Pieta crouched behind the counter in the Chairman's office. Spying, as usual.

John-ny! He halted.

Johnny? He came back a few paces.

Come in and meet the chair. Pieta introduced them.

Johnny this is Dunton Depot. Your chairman. Johnny saw a stocky late middle-aged man in black denims, T-shirt, and vest.

Our Kojack! Pieta added. Johnny saw. He was perfectly bald.

Kojack stared at him. Didn't offer his hand. Not right away. You're the guy we hired. From Montreal.

Yes.

Must be quite a shock.

Yes?

Lethe Bridge.

Yes!

Well, I just want you to know that I love this place very much.

Yes.

Dunton! Pieta tried to make conversation. Johnny's already found an apartment. And he's only been here a few weeks. Isn't that wonderful?

Wonderful, Pieta. Kojack glared at him.

*****

Davey Lateham's office was on the left. He was sick a lot. He quarreled with Depot. He didn't want to teach their introductory-special boot-camp World of Words course. He was a specialist. Rossetti Studies. Bad sonnets and weird households. His wife worked for their piss-pot of a library downstairs. She wore leather pants.

When Johnny called to ask her to order a decent edition of A Tale of A Tub she got angry. Who was Swift anyway? Gulliver's Travels. A Modest Proposal. But A Tale of a Tub?

Who cared?

Besides, wasn't that Benedict Oswald's jurisdiction?

Wasn't he their eighteenth-century MAN?

Maybe she'd better talk to him! Soon as he got back from his sabbatical.

Sure, Johnny said. Say hi for me.

Davey Postham slept off his hangover in the office on the right. He had a fridge. After departmental parties he stole the left-overs and stashed them away for himself and Benedict Oswald to gorge on together. Johnny heard their snacking. Between stupid sexist jokes. Of the how's every little thing variety. They'd run out of jokes, before they went hungry.

Postham's party-piece was sneaking into the Chairman's office after hours and digging up his rivals' old confidential teaching evaluations. He divulged them to the toady president of the Student Council. They were inseparable.

They'd forget that Johnny was on the other side of the wall, listening to their love-making. Then they'd remember and dart out into the hall to see if he was still there. Like mice, only stupider.

Do you suppose he heard us?

*****

Johnny was the stale chicken in the loony-bin club-house. A long line of offices like the death-row cell-block of the criminally insane. In Ghana Pieta worked at the mental hospital. Her specialty was geeks, vampires, zoophagites, and zombies.

Pieta was their Keeper.

*****

Porko always knew when the manager was in, because he'd see his little red convertible sportscar in the enormous parking lot. Always in the same spot. Right in the middle. Under the powerful street-light. The biggest, straightest thing around. A concrete cock in the middle of an empty stump lot.

The car tied to it like a little red condom. The kind of car that would have tasted salty.

That was what all the shopping was really for. The looking. The skimming along aisles of useless stinking rags. Bruce!

Why did he have to be called something so butch? Porko winced every time he heard android voices announcing Telephone for Bruce!

Sometimes, they said Brucee.

At least, that was what he heard....

Fingering the throats of old polo-shirts, at Worthless World. Where Bruce's chest hairs had peaked through, only last week. Touching shoulders that his nipples brushed. Nervous erect.

Telephone for Brucee! Lines one through twelve.

*****

Bruce got so many calls. Long distance! From the States. They didn't make them like that up here. Elmer Fudds! Bruce was a man! Sometimes he forgot his glasses when he went up front to do a cash return. It just blew Porko away.

Tall dark-haired lanky guy with a slight near-sighted stoop. From peering too much. Probably hadn't figured out how to insert his contacts properly. Only wore them at singles' bars. Where he went drinking Friday nights. It was obvious. Late Friday afternoons Porko saw his colleagues giving him the perky thumbs up sign. Bonding. A team player.

Thing Street Asylum

*****

Porko thought he was a Mormon. Or maybe he was till the straight Mormons kicked him out. He wondered. A lot of things could happen on a mission. Horny young studs away from Lethe Bridge for the first time. Forgetting small-town values in The Big City. Hogtown wasn't exactly New York.

Porko met them on the subway. In hot weather just in dark pants, white shirts. Porko sitting there. Mormons towering over him. Peering up a short sleeve right into some young guy's hairy pit. Straw. Like a bird's nest. If only they had that at Worthless World.

*****

He sat down perpendicular to a clean-cut businessfuck in a London Smog trench coat. He'd noticed him. Handsome. Full lips. Aquiline nose. Frank gaze through aviator frames. That's why he sat there. Still he was slightly shocked when the guy started talking. What a big city it was. Kind of lonely....

He couldn't believe his luck. Till he noticed the name tag over the left breast. Elder so and so. His luck hadn't changed after all. So he told him.

I know you're a Mormon. I knew a lot of Mormons out west. Nice guys. Open-minded. Talk about anything. Only I'm homosexual. Got it? Gay! You disapprove of me. We don't agree about anything. We can't get along.

Well, he said. We can still talk.

Yeah, sure. Let's!

I'll arrange a visit! He offered. Opening a diary.

Let's visit right now!

No, no. I mean arrange for some things to drop by. To talk to you.

But we can talk ourselves! The guy paused. A second black plastic name tag gleamed across the car. Another and another! It was like telemarketing! They were being supervised. They were not alone! Porko shut up. The big guy nodded. Wistfully? Who knew.

It was Porko's stop.

*****

Pieta had Johnny over to the doll's house on Coyote Court. Full of hand-made tea-cosies. Pot-holders. Antimacassars....

Made by child-laborers in the Third World. From the downtown Cowgary Friendship Centre.

They were sitting on one of three sofas in a tiny living-room overlooking the street. One of Pieta's groupings. An enormous trilight in the corner. Leafy potted plants in gleaming brass holders. End tables. Hurricane lamps. Pieta's pride and glory. Just like Harlot O'Hara's!

They were talking about the department.

No, Johnny. Dunton is tolerant.

Yeah.

Yes, he is! She sipped some sherry from a dainty glass. Made by children in the Philippines. (A steal!)

If I'd met him I wouldn't have come. He looks like a Nazi.

You should know better than to judge by appearances.

I would rather be that way than invisible.

Pardon?

Nothing, Pieta.

Dunton does not discriminate. After all, I should know.

Johnny stared at her.

All of the others. Postham. Lateham.

Yes. Johnny had heard them. Mocking him. Up and down the corridor. Hi there!

Benny Oswald?

Now Pieta stared. Benny Oswald hates you.

We share the same specialty. It's collegiality!

He's a pig, Johnny. She looked like she was going to cry. I never told anyone this. But I had an abortion!

Johnny waited for her to get control. Rein it in.

All I'm saying is Dunton's different. They would mock you. All of them. If they knew.

Knew?

If they thought you were Gay!

Well, I am....

O Johnny, I'm so glad you said so! Who would have thought we'd ever be having this conversation?

*****

Telephone for Bruce! Telephone for Bruce! Bruce lines one through twelve!

Porko was sure he was from the States. He had that boy next door look. He was more boyishly attractive than the models in the big posters hanging from the ceiling. Two young men and a young woman. Wearing their Worthless World coordinates. Shiny loafers. Light-colored slacks. Faded blue cotton shirt. It was a look. Bruce had it!

Sometimes when Bruce was up front doing cash returns a shopper asked him to hold a pair of pants up to his waist. A shirt against his chest. To see how it would look. Thirty-four inch waist. Forty-two inch chest. Chewing gum. Boyish. Obliging....

Porko noticed the fat beginning to roll over Bruce's waist. His Worthless World accessory.

Sometimes Bruce wore a T-shirt. With an advertisement for a U.S. muscle beach. Unfortunately, he usually wore a plaid shirt over it. Open-necked....

So for a thrilling moment Porko would think Bruce was naked. Red-faced. Sweating. Crepe soles skidding over the linoleum as he tried to turn a heavy metal shelf.

Then he'd see the white T-shirt underneath. Disappointed.

If Porko felt brave he would say something stupid. Like you're the manager, so how come you're doing manual labor?

Bruce always had a reply ready. Like, here everybody labors. Hands in pockets. Gum-chewing. Smiling across the shelf at a colleague. Like he'd taken a course in queer baiting....

Porko wasn't a laborer. He was an idiot.

*****

Sometimes at the Depot. Perfect strangers started screaming at Johnny. The wind. Sometimes it never stopped. For days.

*****

All of the protagonists of Sinclair Ross's As For Me and My House, from the atheistic but artistic preacher (Philip) and his barren wife, to the nymphomaniac showgirl he knocks up (surprise), are distinguished by their unnaturally pale faces, and high cheek-bones.... [O, gawd] This is because they are experiencing the unnaturally high cost of living on the prairies, in the middle of nowhere [boos, farts, Bronx cheers from the back forty] ....

Thus, Mrs. Philco, the totally unreliable and dishonest narrator [bitch, someone offered] of the novel, on her high-strung and temperamental artistic husband, Philco, when their kitchen sink stops up: white and bitter, he seized his pipe, slammed out to the kitchen with it, and threw it in the fire....

Truly one of the great moments of Dadanian Literature, pregnant with the repressed passion and subtle sexual imagery that only a Dadanian, a Western Dadanian, could write [Ahahaha! rolling in the aisles]....

Ditto Philco's paramour, Nympho Judy: She gives a peculiar impression of whiteness while you're talking to her, fugitive whiteness. He turns white, and clenches himself hard with the strain, as he reproduces Judy-Girl's identical palour in art [her cunt, moron]....

Who said that, who?

There is something sinister, indeed Gothic, about all this bloodlessness, relieved in typically monstrous fashion. Pale with passion for Judy-Girl, Philco takes her! [Somewhere, a student screaming.] Pale with passion for revenge against Judy-Girl, Mrs. Philco steals her little baby. [Boo! Hiss!] It's fearful symmetry! [An especially loud fart from a big stud in the back; a bevy of buxom babes wagging their pinkies and chanting fearful, fearful, fearful....]

Given Philco's desperate ruthlessness, from his imperative need to replenish his white corpuscles (he met her glance, and ... the whiteness of her face give way to a little flush of color ... his lips clenched bloodless with restraint....), one can only conclude that this book is really a Prairie Vampire Gothic. [Cheers, applause, buxom babes blowing kisses.]

These things are unreal and hypocritical, they have sold their souls, they are pale and bloodless, they are hungry, they exploit the weak, they destroy the young.... And, finally, because they are preachers in the middle of Southern Alberta, they play the organ loud all night, and sleep all day in grain elevators!!!

[A hale of cigarette butts, safes, diaphragms, and hygienic napkins.]

Thing Street Asylum

*****

Porko felt he was going nowhere. Unless Worthless World was his destination. On the way to the Unemployment Bureau. Part of the routine.

Sometimes he felt like filling out a form and dropping it in the suggestion box. Loan Applications. His free subway pass from More Fucking Idiots. The Income Tax. Johnny's novel.

Then he got ideas.

Bruce should wear nothing. Or stroll barefoot in old cut-offs and a tank-top. Porko would walk in one day and Bruce would throw the keys to the little red car in his face. Come on pal. He'd say. Let's blow this pop stand! We're closing! Get out you B.U.M. Bums! Out!

They would stroll forth together into the parking lot full of dazed confused Worthless Worldlings blinking at the sun. Big vans with U.S. plates. Heading back to the States. With the loot.

They'd march right up to the little red sportscar under the big street-light. Porko would do the honors. Open the passenger door and throw the keys to Bruce who'd pop the lock and hop inside while removing his top and undoing the first three buttons of his cut-offs. In one fluid gesture. For once, no underwear. Porko would notice. He'd drive with his stick.

While loud-speakers blasted the android's announcement. Apocalyptically clear. That old T-shirt or tank-top. Those torn denims.

A work of art ....

*****

Worthless, said the tall, white-haired woman in Ye Olde Brydge Shoppe.

Not even a hundred bucks?

Not even twenty!

Johnny got on the pay phone on the corner of Sin Strip. Beside the tavern. Beside the pawn shop.

Pieta!

Johnny! Why I thought you'd gone.

It's fake Pieta!

What is?

That ring you said your sister got from the pasha.

Ye-es?

Fake!

Oh well, I guess that's why she divorced him. I suppose the pasha was fake too.

So how about my table back?

If I say no you'll just start swearing.

*****

Martinus Mort was introducing Johnny at the Estates General of Lethe Bridge U. Only it was coming out garbled. Is it Doctor? Yes, Doctor! Johnny Midas, from what did you say? The University of Montage? Recently managed to get something published. In, what? Can't make it out! Never even heard of it before.... Whaddya know!

Trixie's intro went smooth as silk.

Benedict Oswald Xeroxed his. Distributed by a stunning blonde. His latest cutie. A real bomb-shell!

> Yeehaw, Pards! As I have been away on Study Leave for the entire academic year, I thought I would take this opportunity, before the hecticity [sic] of September sets in, to report to you on what has been accomplished during the past year or, if I might borrow Marty Mort's marvellous phrase [kiss!], How I spent my academic holiday....
>
> I am pleased to announce the forthcoming publication of ENGLISH HYMNS AND HERS: S/HEMALE HYMN-WRITERS OF THE 18TH CENTURY (New York: Peter Wang Vanity Publishing, Inc., 1992) 12,053 pages. This anthology is the first [and the last] of its kind, and aims itself at a multi-disciplinary audience [like a blunderbuss, thought Johnny, who had started to skim through this crap] .... in our own time might be a prime-time T.V. series [now he was discussing Arsenio Hall!] .... should find a significant and varied readership .... [don't count on it].... concerning [other] involvement in the scholarly community, I was busy doing research and writing most of the time, and assessing the changeless value of Lorimer and Clark Cask-Conditioned Ninety-Shilling Gravity-Pull Heavy [Molson's! Fucking alky pervert! Boozing and fucking his student babes down at the Coal Miners' Inn. Pieta loathed him. For ruining so many women of color].... Etc. etc.

Pioneers of Alienation

*****

Dunton Deppo looked unusually baleful. Something in his hand. A diploma? He gave it to Johnny. Not saying a word. It was a letter.

Read it, said Kojack. Johnny read it. Kojack watching.

Dear Sir:

I am writing anonymously to let you know of a situation that should be put right; it concerns a member of the faculty, professor johnny midas. Firstly, he is homosexual and has used his position to harass me and some others. He is also strongly anti-feminist, strongly anti-women, and has made many disparaging and insulting comments about women.

This is not the type of individual who should be in contact with the youth. A number of students have expressed their hatred for him, and the desire that he be shot.

We're convinced he has Aids.

Please get rid of this odious individual before he poisons the entire English Department, and then THE WHOLE WORLD!

Oh, yeah....

He's also racist, a Clansaman of the WORST kind!

To him there is only one valid, supreme race: homosexuals!

Please, get rid of him!

Fondly co-signed,

Babyface Marjoram,
Fragile Souled Ph.D. Candidate
Montage U's Brightest Light....

Max (the Butcher) Romanof
Professor of Criminology and Social Work, High-Minded Colleague,
Artist, Friend, Survivor....

A great way to start your weekend. It was Friday.

Right. More endearments from low-grade morons.

Now read this. It was the envelope. Johnny recognized the postmark. The English Department of the University of Montage. His own Festering Mater.

Well, well.

I'm glad it wasn't one of us, he said. I want you to know that I regard it almost as if it never happened. He turned and walked back down the long corridor. Almost!?

Johnny sat down and composed the following.

Dearest Comrades:

I write to warn the academic community of the desperate plight of fags in the Departement d'Etudes Anglaises at the University of Montage, where I stole my doctorate years ago.

The Departement d'Etudes Anglaises has long been a disturbed place [Bedlam]. Because of its aging cadre [Rube Goldberg, Dildo Wingnut, etc.], and its being a ghetto within a French university [Rhodesia], it has become insular, and even slightly out of touch [schizophrenic]....

Instead of integrating students [like me, but not me] into the academic community [mafia], it services a coterie of professors and their little friends [Boys' Town].

I was the hardest working student member of the assemblee departementale, and was always willing to share....

Nevertheless, I was harassed and verbally assaulted by Rube Goldberg and Dildo Wingnut....

I guess some things just want it all....

I taped Dildo's mug shot to the urinal, where it spoiled his tryst with Babyface, the night I graduated....

I have continued to publish. My compositions have appeared in the most famous stalls and urinals, on the greatest organs, of Thing Street....

Yet, my alma matter has consistently persecuted me by inexplicably refusing to give me any more money!

Instead of the Ordure of Dadania, I have received homophobic hate-mail, originating from the English Department at the Universite de Montage....

Thing Street Asylum

From Rube's creature, Babyface Marjoram....

The departement has consistently ignored my complaints [relished them], and refused to undertake an investigation of this, the latest in a series of affronts.

They threatened that, if I pursued this matter, they would give me the treatment....

The secretary indicated that she had signed material, typed on the same machine as the original homophobic letter, Dean Balzac's Underwood, and horribly misspelled. She has subsequently vanished....

She may be dead!

The writer of the attached homophobic letter, by ruining my career as a teacher of English, hopes to deny me my only chance for true love and happiness [Lance Dishlexy]....

I never hear professionalism more loudly vaunted than by homophobes and closet-queens who, rather than denounce the mistreatment of homosexuals in this country, maintain a telling silence.

At meetings of O.B.T.U.S.E. [Organization of Bitches Teaching Us Something Else] they wipe their noisy ass-holes with rejected papers on queers and secret masturbators.

[Fuck YOU!],

Johnny-Boy Midas.

*****

Sorry to do this to you, JOHNNY!

Dunton Depot gave him a photocopy of an article by Hannah Arendt. Walter Benjamin and the Nazis. His suicide. Cheers, he said.

*****

In the coolie under the wonderful bridge. Whole families standing around. Dogs baying. Regarding the trestles. Like maybe they'd missed him!

Flying the other way across the Dadanian Shield. When it occurred to him.

Some names are thematic. Others rhematic. Some stand for form. Others for continent!

The whole joint one big Lethe Bridge. Not some place you forgot but always wanted to remember. Really unforgettable. Held together by Dadanian Pacifier. Bad memories. Should've studied demolition. Maybe he'd take it up one day.

Some place you wanted to forget, but always remembered.

*****

We do it in a body, in a troop
especially by water, where the cars
idle in rows like thirsty copulars.
We did it in the backseat of a coup
and did it at the backdoor, on a stoop
under the ceiling and beneath the stars,
but do it, within hearing of the tars
with an unheard of solitary whoop!
We do it better from this net of spars
the easiest, the last exalting hoop
we manage in a passage mainly bars,
and drop where they conveniently droop.
Yours is the only holiday that mars
(we celebrated when we looped that loop).

*****

Pioneers of Alienation

The highlight of Porko's Academic Career. Careening in a chartered schoolbus. Through every chartered street. Hotsy driving. All the way from Cartoon U in Pottowa, the Nation's Crap-it-all. The Original Shit City. To see Ulysses. In Rochester, New York.

Starring Frankie?

Hotsy Scotsy made it a big deal. Class trip. You could say that again. Even the Trotskyite Students Association got involved. Stopped at the border. Porko with his Complete Masterworks in a shopping bag.

What's in the bag, bud?

Shit, he wanted to say. My life, ass-hole.

Just some notes for the movie. At The Crapital. I mean Capitol, sir.

Going to see the President, are we?

No, Ulysses.

In Washington?

No, at the Capitol Cinema, Rochester, NY.

And what's Mr. Ulysses doing there?

He's starring in a movie, with Frankie.

Ain't you got him confused with the Manchurian Candidate? Stupid Smart-Ass College-Kids. Well, so long as nobody got any drugs more powerful than a Coka-Cola....

O thank you, officer. Hotsy at his nicest. He'd have made a good psychopath, or a process-server. So he became a crummy teacher. Good with children. Little Johnny puts up his hand to go to the crapper. Hotsy slugs him.

Porko fell asleep in Molly's Soliloquy.

*****

Porko awoke in a cold sweat, in a cold, empty apartment on North Draine Street. Honkytown. Whiteyville.

To the nasal strains of Presto Mainline asserting that the the Prime Sinister of Dadania was crazy.

Grand Vizier Alapaloozah asserting in Ottoman Greek that the Leader of the Deformed Party was an infidel junkie.

Ah, reality.

*****

Porko nattering insanely about the new wonder-drug. Hardonium. At last a big weiner, with no side-effects. Boarding the bus outside his Shitty Home apartment. A world-class talk-show hostess like Dini Petme gets on ahead of him. Boing! Takes hours to go down. Porko heard all about it, on educational TV.

Don't watch it all the time, Porko said.

Sure, Porko. Just the sex shows. And Seinfeld.

Porko said he never watched it. At least not a whole episode start to finish. He'd always thought Seinfeld was the fat guy.

Johnny said it was supposed to be about nothing, or New York Jews. Same thing.

Porko quacked something about Larry Saunders. Maybe there'd be a big Larry Saunders Final Episode Party. Like for Seinfeld and Mash. Porko hoped so. Maybe Dini Petme would show up.

Sure, Porko. More like Tom Hanks.

Porko wasn't sure, but he thought Larry would probably quit in the last episode.

Naturally, Johnny thought.

Porko quacked on about the last episode. Larry had done a previous episode in Hitler drag. Seinfeld was supposed to be the special guest. When he saw a tape of Larry in Hitler drag doing a Nazi salute with his penis, because he'd been taking Hardonium, Seinfeld stormed off the set. Larry's assistant caught up with Seinfeld at the door and apologized profusely. Larry promised to pull his fascist phallus sketch. Seinfeld said he wanted it cut. Har har har.

Johnny hadn't been following very closely. He wanted to hit Porko for another handout. He thought he was earning his money. Porko owed him.

Larry Saunders was so cynical, Porko quacked. Just like Jonathan Swift!

Johnny threw up. Swift with Porko's permanent conceited prick-ass smirk on his face. Without the indignation or the ability to disturb the reader by making him the object of the satire just by reading it. Without the passion. Without the ideas. Without the intelligence.

Instead a crummy complacent shittiness reinforced and justified by the flattering implication that oneself was at the top of the shit-heap instead of the bottom where one belonged. Where Swift never let one think one wasn't. With everyone else whose principal claim to culture was owning a TV set.

Fuck-off, Porko. Gimme money.

Porko pulled a twenty-dollar bill from his greasy jean-jacket and threw it on the table in the Coffee Slime where they sat. Like he had put it there before so he wouldn't have to show Johnny his wallet. Creep, thought Johnny. Fucker! (Pocketing the money.) He certainly had earned it.

Thing Street Asylum

*****

Whores on cell phones blocking the entrance of The Buffer Inn Mall. Shopping Centre of the Living Dead. Pimps jamming the payphones with forged calling cards. Calling Buffalo. Detroit. 'Lantic City.

Looking for Johns. Handicapped guys in red nylon ski-jackets. In wheelchairs. Drooling.

A filthy shit and mud-spattered cab wallows across the empty garbage-strewn parking lot and lurches to a halt halfway across the broken sidewalk in front of the door. Blocking it. Who cares. The dread behind the wheel hates them all. Hogtowners! (Scum. Excrement.)

The drooler slowly trundles himself onto the sidewalk. A whore in black-face barges past him. Taxi! Tax - eeeeeee! He swerves. The cabby pops the door open from inside. The drooler smashes into it head first. The whore hops inside. She slams the door shut after her. Drags his face a meter across the sidewalk.

Shit! That door's heavy! Handy Haven. Step on it!

Say that again, lady?

Shit! Wally's place! You deaf, man?

Charlie W. Handy's! Tenured muthafuck from the U of Titz. Ran a glow-ball chain of psychomes and Handy Havens. First Vice-President of the Dadanian Psychoanalytic Congress ever to be impeached. For pissing in Marshall McLulu's funereal urn. Dick stuck in the amphora. The neck wound. Almost made him hard. Over the stiff! Dirty necro pervert smashed it, getting off! Cops caught'em. Smashed, and still got busted. The alky....

Shaddup stoopid fuck. Wally was my thesis advisor. Now he's my pimp! I got my Master's so shut the fuck up. Hear me, stoopid fuck? Respect your betters!

Yes, mam! Or should I say Master?

That's more like it! She leaned back against the greasy vinyl upholstering. Trixie Zane, Mistress of the Arts.

You'll get a position. From the KAMA SUTRA! He grumbled to himself as they made their tortuous way through the mud-choked streets of Hogtown in the spring.

The asphalt had exploded in places, from the pressure of the overburdened sewer system on the constricted water mains. Springtime! Did all constipation end the same? Under Alapaloozah, things weren't exactly looking up. Everything worth anything had already been sold. For decades all the poor things had been flocking to Hogtown for relief. Now Hogtown had to pay the welfare all by itself. The taxes shot up. Panic! Exit to the Burbs. Taxes shot up again. Chaos!

Hogtown was bankrupt! Contractors were months in arrears. Couldn't even get a plumber to unplug the urinals at Metro Hall. No dice! Full of chewing gum. Have to wear boots every time you take a leak. Lucky if you still have running water! Damned lucky if it's potable!

Things lining up at a busted water main on Thing Street. Holding out empty buckets. Beggars! Drawing water. Some had yokes attached to their backs. Oxen! Carrying two, three, four buckets. Dozens maybe!

Trixie couldn't bear to look. Stoopid fucks! Thank god Wally had running hot & cold! All the amenities. Who said Ph.D.s were worthless?

Who said they couldn't FUCK?

Charlie W. Handy, for Mayor of MEGACITY. On account of his SUGARSTICK.

No wonder he got it stuck in that damn urn! A megagood thing he didn't lose it, too.

Mmmm-mmmm-mmmm!

*****

Johnny barely noticed the fat bitch with the cell-phone at the entrance to the Buffer Inn. He watched her as she made a bull-run for the wallowing taxi-cab. Cut off the poor cripple. Opened the door right in his kisser! Johnny saw it all. What a shame. He hurried on to get his mail.

Maybe somebody'd accepted one of his novellas. The sonnets. His Recollections of Montage. O, boy! Maybe it was waiting. In a nice envelope. On good paper for a change. An acceptance! With a cheque!

A package deal!

The Nobel Prize!

Heartless little ephebe.

*****

The little park-benches inside the mall were full of old farts the cops arrested on Thing Street and deposited there to keep out of trouble.

The old main in the sailor-suit eye stared vacantly at the checker-board in front of him, dreaming of the pool-table at the Snake Pit....

Pioneers of Alienation

Jack!

Johnny suddenly felt young again....

He glanced at his reflection in the mirror at Things' Bonanza Jewelry.

His haircut was a bit shaggy. That razor-blade contraption from Mahmud Fukabuck's didn't work so good....

He was paunchy and the mirror made him even lankier than he was.

Still, in a certain light, he was pretty....

Hey, cutie....

If only he could afford those second-hand loafers at Worthless World. If only Bruce would SERVICE him!

Butch had ones just like them! Maybe those were his!

In Bullshit Through the Ages....

Butch in the back....

With Jah Lo See and the other hot babes....

The fun they would have had, over his Nuts Store....

Like a broad in nylons, he kicked off his loafers and put his feet up on the back of the chair in front of him....

Thinking about it got Johnny hot....

He slowed down in front of the running-shoe store....

Cuties in runners and open-necked polo-shirts. Gold chains glistening among the chest hairs. His favorite had a fresh hair-cut....

Guys with short hair turned him on....

Big beefy security pulled up alongside. Sweaty pits. Tattoos on hairy forearms. HATE FAIRIES! For a moment he was afraid they were on to him, then they brushed past, after some tart with a cell-phone....

He sneaked into the post-office in the drug-store. Jah Lo See was writing script for John Travolta.

Pushers and junkies! Everywhere!!

Faxes? Johnny asked her in a desperate whisper.

What about them, Honky?

Did I get any?

Check your mail-box.

He stuck his arm in up to the pit. Groped around. Nothing! Not a kleenex.

He continued through the mall.

Then he saw it. Megacity protest stand! Manned by a couple of middle-aged faggots. Suits, steel-rimmed spectacles. Brooks Brother Number One nabbed him. Started asking questions. Too many questions! Writing on his clipboard. Taking notes. Johnny suspected something was up. Number Two was busy adjusting something on their bulletin board. Or pretending to be. Obviously together....

Young man, have you cast your ballot in the Megacity Referendum?

No, not yet. But I intend to.

That's wonderful! Won-der-ful! You're on the Voter's List I assume?

List? There's a list?! Bastards! Conscription! Not necessarily, unless necessary....

Of course. Why, didn't you get a ballot, in the mail?

Nothing. Ripped off again! Bastards!

Well, we'll remedy that immediately! He prepared to forward his address to Alapaloozah's agents. They'd caught another subversive. This man ripped up his ballot. He'd never vote for Alapaloozah. He'd never even vote....

Brooks Brother reached for his cell-phone....

Did he want to vote or didn't he? Meaning for Alapaloozah.... The only choice, for Democracy!

Well, uh. Johnny thought he must be some kind of teacher, with the National Socialists. Yeah! He'd better beat it before he called for reinforcements, his fuck buddy loitering on the other side of Big Al's larger than life-size effigy. Before he knew it, he'd key his name, address, and blood type into a Hollerith Card.

He wanted to tell him how much he hated all governments, how they never did him any good, how he was always so far away by the time help arrived, it was over....

Instead, he said he didn't care. It didn't matter.

Suddenly Brooks Brother Number Two got very confidential. Obviously it was a good-cop, bad-cop routine. They had it down pat. He was the good cop. He slithered over to Johnny.

Oh, no! That's where you're wrong, you see. Some of them really don't care, but not Alapaloozah! He's different....

Yeah? He cares, when it comes to fucking me over! There's an odor of meGAcity in this room....

It's still the ugliest place on the planet! Look at Thing Street! Nothing but flops! Dumps! Dives! Miles and miles of the same depressing duplexes. Rotting porches. Scruffy gardens. Alleys full of neurotoxic waste and self-medicated rats. Garages crumbling ....

Number One was getting nervous. Looking for another client....

Anyone....

They should just nuke it! Thing Street!

Thank you! I trust we can count on your vote in the forthcoming election.

At last! He spotted someone. Have you voted in the Megacity Referendum? He asked an old man in a motorized wheelchair.

It was Jack....
What kind of pool hall is this, he demanded?
I trust we can count on your vote again this year, youngster?
Only if you get me another scooter!
Sir?
I paid for your education!

*****

Changing the names ever so slightly. Made him mad. Sitting in a Handy Haven. In the piazza opposite Hogtown's only T.V. station.

That it got to prove it was world class, because it could watch itself on T.V.

Thing Street....

A sphincter with no secrets!

Johnny stole looks at the young cutie at the little metal table behind them.

Big stud. Ankle of one leg resting on knee of the other. Hiking boots. Fine blond hair growing along the shins. The backs of his calves. Fat from exercise. Riding his bike all winter. Bald spots from rubbing against his pants. First day warm enough for shorts. Big blond head stuck in a Sow magazine. Trying to look like he was reading.

Johnny watched as he planted both big boots firmly on the ground. Slightly butch, as he rummaged in his knapsack on the floor, for ciggies. Lit up. Exhaled a big drag, the big dope....

This could make trouble for me, Porko was whining. It really could.

Who cared. Not Johnny, that heartless little fag. Besides, Porko'd blabbed about Johnny to virtually every fucking idiot he knew. Every time Johnny met one of Porko's office pals the fucking idiot immediately started to cross himself.

I'm the messenger. I have to be secure.

Bullshit! You're the mailboy.

Johnny was more interested in the cutie. Putting out his ciggy. Starting a brush fire on his thighs.

You didn't change the names enough.

How about Asshole, Fuckface, Shithead?

The cutie was unlocking his bike from the little iron railing surrounding the patio. A much greater loss than Porko's temper.

Devastating!

*****

Now Sean O'Jay and Little Elmer B. Porko were the last of the Old Guard at More Fucking Idiots.

Sean was still the receptionist. Elegant. Imposing. Bright blue eyes. Patrician nose. High forehead. Swept-back black hair. Cherry-red lips. The Brooks Brothers torso towered over the partition. The wheelchair hidden behind it like Roosevelt's at Yalta. M.F.I.'s F.D.R.

No one would have suspected that Sean O'Jay was regularly battered by his wife.

He took her on tours which he paid for entirely out of his receptionist's salary, although she was a Deputy Minister.

In Dublin he had done all the tourist things. He went to the Abbey Theatre. He bought a program to prove it. Well, it made him happy. He was the sort of man who pronounced aloud every word of every book he ever read.

He went to Trinity College Dublin, trundled by some obliging man (sucker, Porko knew), over the rough cobblestones. Rattle rattle rattle, his chin rapidly nodding, rattle rattle rattle against his bony chest. He resembled a Christmas figurine, emptied of bonbons, head nodding on a spring. With a pretty little painted face.

Imposing and imposed on. Like the cobblestones. Pointless, but hard.

Rattle, rattle, rattle. All life long.

Before the Big Irish Trip he had asked Porko to help him get his passport photos done. Porko wasn't really supposed to run errands on More Fucking Idiot time, but there were other, more personal things which Porko did. Why not? Porko wheeled Sean to the photgrapher's. Rattle rattle.

The door was too small, so the photographer removed the hinges. It was still too small, so he removed the jamb. Finally he took his picture. Porko wheeled Sean back to the office.

Where he remembered that he'd had his passport photos done last week. Porko decided to offer Sean's wife a drink, next time he ran into her downstairs.

Pioneers of Alienation

It was The New Age. There were more bums than ever before. Sean asked Porko to buy a box of Tim Bits for him and drop them off at the Food Bank.

The P/Bigge Banks made record profits, billions. Millions of things didn't make enough to buy food. Former employees of the P/Bigge Banks, tellers and file-clerks, were replaced by electronic machines that didn't eat. Things suicided, urging clients to use The Machine....

Did you know you could pay that bill at the electronic teller, my deadly rival, one would inquire.

Porko knew.

It's so easy, it saves time if not jobs, she would argue.

How many times did he have to tell her? He did not want to know.

She was just doing her job, she would explain. Till the P/Bigge Bank fired her, and a billion like her. Till Porko shut up and used the machine like everybody else.

He used the machine. It was the new age.

*****

He recognized him. Smoking.

With Jah Lo See. Before Bullshit Class.

Tsk! tsk! Terrible thing to do those lungs. Under such nice pectorals.

Familiar brush-cut hair. Business type. Always came in a trench coat. Till later....

A butch James Cagney. A skinny Orson Welles. The Third Man. He could almost hear that zither music! Dah-da-dah da-dah! Da-dah! Da-dah!!

Said he couldn't smoke at home either.

Bitch, thought Johnny.

Wife and kids threw him out of the house every time he lit up.

Really? Tell Johnny more.

In the summer he smoked over the backyard fence, with all the other fathers.

Johnny couldn't make that scene. Husbands and fathers. Bermudas and sandals. Swimming trunks. Hideous boxer shorts....

Sub-urbanites....

Discussing the Bernardos....

*****

All the news was Megacity. Track-suited cheer-leaders with megaphones shouting it from rooftops. Scaling the facades of former banks and department stores. Blind pigs and psychomes....

MEG-a-CI-ty or me-Ga-ci-ty.

On every street, an odor of me-Ga-ci-ty....

*****

Butch comes home from school....

Yanks off his neon all man-made fiber tie. The one with pooh bears....

Feels like he's been hanging in it all day. Every day five days a week slowly revolving in the air-conditioned breeze on his ball-bearinged swivel-seat. Not really there at all. Suspended animation. Slowly asphyxiating. No one notices or everyone too busy with his own problems. Staggering around in a slow-motion panic. Grabbing at file-drawers. Black post-war telephones madly ringing.

Then suddenly a reprieve. Just in time. Somebody passes him a pair of scissors. Every night he cuts himself down and staggers off to catch his breath.

Phew! Just got home....

Rips off the Arrow © shirt. Popping the buttons.

Now for the Man of Steel....

Hairy-chested gorilla-man. Scratching. Dark moons under the pits. Half-moons. Full-moons.

O mo-o-o-o-n of Ala-ba-a-a-a-ma-w-w-w....

Kicks off the Gucci-loafers. Skipping the soles across the linoleum.

Pads over to the frigidaire in his execu-hose. Leaving wet sweat-prints.

Open sesame!

Stooping and peering inside. Shirt-tail wagging like a pointer-dog's. Flushing some pheasant.

Blow gently sweet zephyr. Spreading his wings.

Got a sweet little angel and I love the way....

Thing Street Asylum

A Hogtown Hoppy Co. Blue Beaver Brew! Split a Beaver with a pal!
Or have it all to oneself....

*****

He considered the living-room's blue shag rug and freshly refurbished loveseat with marbleized tea-table. He violated it with his stockings. They looked good against the marble. Blue-veined.

Cool! Head in the cushions. Ass on the springs. His thoughts flew out the picture-window....

He saw the other Bungalows with attached-garages....

Why with and attached, he wondered? Show that one to Johnny. Nice ole English teacher. Fairy nice. Oh, yeah!

Just try that out on my next Beowulf paper! Flip'im out entirely.

He'll say tautological....

Always tautological.... Johnny's fave!

Not that he had such a big repertory. Not that it was a bloody arsenal. Like the Pentagon. Not by a long shot!

More like the Dadanian Mint. A few old emblems on a cake tin....

Faulty parallelism, ambiguous reference, shift (a big one!)....

Funny how that garage hung on, though. Like glue. Every time he described the dumps where he lived, on Inches Street, they were Bungalows with attached garages....

Sorry, Johnny....

Other just-married monkeys in bermudas and sandals swung from their porch-railings, shoved mowers across patches of sage brush, watered dusty ranch-wagons from coiled fire-hose....

There's Harry Cardigan getting off!

From the kitchen he encouraged his neighbor, the civil-servant, but of course Harry couldn't see him, standing in stocking-feet, the remnants of his sweaty Arrow wrapped around his waist, clenching a warm Beaver....

Suddenly he feared to cross that ocean of shag. To pollute it with his sweaty feet. Only to burden the sofa with his funky butt.

What if Babs caught him? Fucker! She'd break his tits! Wouldn't be the first time, either! Worse than Johnny with his shift. At least Johnny could be amusing. Once-cute has-been of a little fairy. Emotional, those faggots.

Johnny didn't get physical when he was angry. Not like Babs, anyway.

Babs was a nutcase, an animal.

*****

A giant dusty red-brick shoebox baking in a corner of the empty parking lot. All the other buildings on Vagina converted to walk-in Shrink Brinks and One-Stop Thesis Suppository Cafes (like the gigantic Blunder Print across the street) or otherwise assimilated by the cultural depredations of the Mighty U of Titz.

The shrinks did a brisk trade in spurious doctor-notes:

> Dear Prof Whatever:
>
> Can't you tell Johnny SICK, you heartless dumb fuck! No more essays, assignments, tests, examinations or work of any kind! Hear? Be governed accordingly, or ELSE!
>
> Professor C. Lamprini Eel
> Fellow of the Royal College of Anal Surgeons

A good Suppository Cafe turned any bag-full of paper scraps and silly doodles into a thesis in an hour. A very brisk trade! BIG business! MEGA!

On the south side of the giant moldering shoe-box, on the other side of dumpy Cardboard Street, the massive Jocko-Homo Complex. A sadistic Baron's private concrete Sodom.

Stupendous! Shrieked the tenured Jamesians lining the sidewalk moat. Ogling the swim-team. Pince-nez jumping. The architraves! The crenelations! Eying their cocks. Their tits as they lined up for the matutinal swimmeat. Occasionally an emeritus toppling into the pool from the giant indoor grandstand. Screams! Panic! Lance Dishlexy to the rescue. Massive shoulders rising. Hairy ankles thrashing. Grappling some Jamesian hippopotamus. A rubber tire! A dingy! Dyslexic!

The whole swimteam! Since 1850! Same families! Dadania blue-bloods! Congenital! Hereditary! Three generations enough! Six too many!

*****

Pioneers of Alienation

It was summer. Late August. Vagina Rd. full of buses full of Honkies immigrating to Chinatown. Coolieville.

The Chinese Bourgeoisie fleeing en masse. To the 'burbs....

Downtown hot and stinky. Busy! Constant atonal shrieking from loudspeakers. Pneumatic drill accompaniment. Karaoke bars blazing.

Somebody doesn't like your singing? Hates your atonal guts?

Blam! Blam! Blam-a-lam! Karaoke Killings!

Said Jah Lo See sang like shit. Then he opened fire.

Plastered all over the tabloids.

Suspect took off in a Toyota.

Solly! No speak Engrish!

After the fuzz fade: I say, chaps. Good show!

Hogtown World Class Shitheap! Beijing! New York! Honk Kong!

Just wait till they get the Olympics! Bulldoze whole Thing Street into Lake Dadania.

They'll make Tienamen Square look like Piccadilly Circus.

Here comes the International Olympic Organizing Committee! Franco-Fascists! Old geezers all! Eurotrash! Sure can eat though! And drink? I'll say! And they got nothing against drugs either!

Alapaloozah salivated. He promised his good buddy, the Francofascist DON JUAN SARABAND, megabucks in kick-backs, graft, drug deals. He guaranteed they'd make big-bucks even if nobody else did. Their payola would be on time and over budget.

Alapaloozah was a barbarian. It didn't matter if he had little understanding. He and his buddies had many little understandings....

All barbarians were on the same frequency....

Oink belch fart swill yummmm and gimme some more....

Meanwhile, in the shadow of Vlad's sado-maso-jocko-homo-house. Cuties prancing around in shorts. Joggers in briefs. Hairy-hoofed stallions. No socks in their shoes. Post-doctorals strolling around shirtless. Post-pectorals too. Still muscular. Even if their guts sagged out.

Having their looks and losing them too. Like having your cake. Or your meat. And somebody else (Death?) eating it too.

Leading huge pitbulls around on tiny leather leashes. In case you didn't get ideas.

Johnny sitting up there in his stinking shoe-box. Trying to stay away from the windows....

Never satisfied with their marks! Some of them take it rather hard. Personally! Like Jah Lo See with the freebies. All those books from Professor Oldfuck's abandoned office. On the top floor of Flagship College. Old fucker too feeble even to go up anymore. Gave Jah Lo See the keys. Wonder why.

Jah Lo See gave Johnny a call. Why not come over? Help yourself! (He'll never know!)

They split with shopping-bags-full. No strings attached.

In May the phone rings. Jah Lo See, again. Surprise, surprise. Unhappy with a B. Johnny explains. B is for bribe.

Hung up in Johnny's face. Right in the kisser! Unrealistic expectations. Too hard on herself!

Johnny hoped she didn't have a Mauser.

Johnny up there eating a fishmarine sandwich. Phone rings again.

Johnny picks up the shiny-black Post-War receiver. Only a dial-tone. Must be the door!

O hurry! Maybe a cutie!

But caution! Maybe not. Maybe Jah Lo See! With a....

Johnny peered down the stairway to the downstairs sidedoor with the stenciled lettering. East Pacific-Rim Think-Tank Work-Shop Study-Group. Jah Lo See? Somebody looking for the think-tank?

Butch!

In jeans – and an immaculate white turtle-neck! With a bright red tennis racket stenciled over the left nipple!

Hair-cut longer than usual, but an open-necked Polo shirt!

He thought he liked Alena!

*****

Harry Cardigan loved to march. He had a doctorate in anal history so he could do Confederate Army parades with his sphincter. Recently there'd been a series on the American Civil War on U.S. Public Television. He'd loyally watched every episode. He regaled his Fucking Idiots with Sherman's march.

A short, pale man with beady bird-eyes....

Harry autographed those pink slips Porko ferried. So Porko gave him the autographed copy of Mackenzie Queen's autobiography, that Johnny bought for fifty cents, at an antigue store on Rue Notre Dame in Montreal, and presented to Porko with a fond inscription.

After he tore out the inscription and threw it away, Porko told Harry that he found it himself; he refused to say how much he paid for it. It was just something he wanted him to have. Maybe Mackenzie Queen had liked to march. Maybe it went with cardigans.

It went with ass-holes....

Judging by the fruit on the fly-leaf, the pretty in pince-nez. S/HE led the country in World War II because all the MEN got killed off in World War I.

BIG HAIRY really liked the book....

Wilhelm Lionel Mackenzie QUEEN.

Porko was among the last to go. He and Sean. The receptionist and the mail-boy.

*****

Trying to mop up the sweat with paper-towels from the metal dispensers in the old bank johns. Wondered how often they'd been used for that before. Put a big thick stack beside the coffee-maker on the black-painted book-shelf. Help yourself, Butch. Not just like home. Not wifey's fresh linen. Abitibi-Price.

He was still totally naked. His cock only beginning to soften. Come down a little. He took a towel and daubed gingerly at the end of his penis. Rough! Toilet paper would do a better job, he said. Johnny prepared to fetch some. Don't bother, he said. This'll do.

The sun struck straight on the venetian blinds. Closed of course. Slats of light struck across Butch's back. His shoulders. Whorls of shit-blonc hair, darker than that on his head, around his nipples. Otherwise, almost smooth. Breasts sagging a little. Stomach maybe a little more. Still not bad though. Could almost be a post-doc.

He daubed at his pits where the sweat had beaded on the long, brown hair. Darkened a little by moisture. That old air-conditioner wasn't making much difference. Remember to call Flipper at Thing's College Square. Send a repairman. A nice one, this time. How could he have his tricks up here, if the air-conditioner didn't work? In August!

Butch was starting to dry off. Cool down. His penis shrank into its nest. Like an iguana, resting. Calmer now (Bruce was a komodo). So hot he left a couple of wet footprints on the cheap broadloom. Like Friday with Crusoe. Come to think of it. It was Friday. What an outburst. What an explosion! Too bad about the rug, though.

*****

The boys in Bullshit Through the Ages wanted to go out with Johnny. The girls too.

Really they just wanted to go out with the boys.

Johnny wondered why they couldn't just get lost.

Then there was Lance Dishlexy. Tall guy. Big shit. Even in sneakers. Which he always wore. And thick army socks.

Johnny wanted to get a good look at his ankles but never could. That was later too! Always sat in the middle row with his girlfriend. Blond bomb-shell. Came in holding hands. Hmmm.

Met him outside Flagship College. On the Cruiser Trail. Lance in jean-jacket and a black turtle-neck. Black hair ruffling just a little in the breeze. Binder under his lanky arm. Started nattering. Three feet in the air above Johnny's head. How he'd have to take the exam separately. On account of his condition. Take it anywhere you like. Take it at my place!

Take it up your ass!

Tried to get Lance Dishlexy into his private seminar too. Tried to give the blond away to a teaching assistant. Only the Lance went with her. Inspeparable....

Should've been married. Disgusting!

At the last meeting of Bullshit Through the Ages Johnny had trouble reading Chaucer. Never liked the guy. Stag night circa 1200 A.D. Real clever piggie. Couldn't figure out what they saw in him. Tenured fuckers! Maybe that was it.

Couple of bitches up front start cutting up. Johnny said it was like another language. Yeah, say the bitches. English! Which one you think you been teaching? Bitches! Cunts! To think he gave the young one an extension. Ungrateful! He'd have to take another look at her grade.

He was reading about Rusty Rooster. Chanticleer. How he messed up over sex. So the fox got him. Saw Butch nodding at Jah Lo See in the back. Story of his life. Hers too, probably. He missed her pharmacist drag....

My stud, Johnny thought. Little red rooster in a trench coat. Bay Street Chanticleer.

Johnny distributed some cheap French table-wine. From big litre-size bottles. Kressman. All he could afford. Even gave some to the bitches up front. Hoped they choked. Maybe they were allergic. They'd throw a fit. Die. He gave some to Butch. Remembering those times over the Nuts Store. Of course. Butch looked at Jah Lo See. Raised an eyebrow. Use it all the time, he said. For cooking. Smart ass. Jah Lo See covered her mouth. Butch gulped his down. Want some more, Butch? Yes, sir!

Now their collective unconscious got the idea of going out. Together! The whole Bullshit class. Lance suggested a bar on Cardboard Street where all the rowers went to get drunk after exercise. Male bonding in a big beer hall like a sauna. Butch loved Beowulf. Those thanes. Bonding in their big beer hall. Just the place.

Lance sat beside Johnny at a heavy wooden table. Butch bought rounds. He was loaded. Soon, they all were.

Somehow, Johnny's knee and Lance's thigh kept rubbing together.

The next thing he knew, they were joined at the hip. Lance even shoved the table away, manfully. To make a point.

Suddenly, he got it up, practically turning the table. Madame Blavatsky couldn't do it, like that....

He removed a pool-cue from the wall holder. A big, long pool-cue....

Manfully....

Asked, if anybody wanted a game.

Butch obliged. Removed his tie. (Manfully.) Opened his vest. Sure, kid!

They strode over to a nearby table. For a little bonding....

They returned, several beers later.

Butch asked Johnny what his mark was. Just like that! Point blank.

Johnny said all he cared about was that fucking mark. He'd had several, too....

Butch said it was because he came from an all-female family. Like Johnny. Hard to get any affection. The bank was all-female too. So things like marks had to substitute. So what was his mark, anyway?

Johnny figured he was....

Then the babes started objecting. What was he? A fucking misogynist? A homo, maybe?

Butch said, maybe he had a little too much to drink. Didn't get out much anymore. What with a wife, two daughters. He'd come a long way from the condo over the Nuts Store. Wasn't used to it anymore . He was getting a gut....

So what about you, Lance? Get enough affection? Got any plans for the evening? They really wanted to know. Obviously the party was breaking up....

*****

He and Porko. Together again. At Foul-Murder Chicken, aka Bug-Eye Birdy's. Johnny complaining....

Choose your prostitution. At least that kind pays.

What do you mean?

Teaching's the kind of prostitution that doesn't pay.

How so?

It's the business schools and the science programs that matter. We sell them our respectability, such as it is.

Oh, I get you. We turn them into little Leavisites.

Gentlemen, if you please.

But that's not all there is to it. Literature offers you another consciousness, another subjectivity.

Stay home, watch a movie.

Oh, I know; it's not the only....

Even if it is, you don't need a teacher for that; in fact, the teacher's only in the way.

Oh, I don't know. There are some who need you.

Did you need anybody? Did anybody do you any good? Or me?

That's a poser....

How he missed teaching. When he wasn't doing it. Which was most of the time.

It was some drive, not being fulfilled. Some higher instinct. What he missed about it most was....

Porko looked him in the eye....

Because he couldn't spell....

But wait and see....

The sex!

*****

He got Butch into his private seminar....

With Jah Lo See....

Butch liked Alena (a whole lot).....

*****

Thing Street Asylum

After the big booze-out Lance Dishlexy dropped by the shoe-box. For his essays. And a few pointers for the exam. Answers, if possible. Should've warned Johnny, he'd be wearing shorts.

Took his breath away. Sun streaming through the slats over Vagina Ave. Glinting off the flanks of the giant jocko-homo palace across the street. Onto Lance Dishlexy's leg-hairs.

In short-shorts. A bathing suit. A polo shirt like Prince Fuck's. Heavy black-leather Jesus sandals. Prehensile big toe-nails. Needed cutting. Green at the edges. Sun-glasses. Fifties rock-star look.

All the babes sitting in a circle on Clockwork Orange chairs in grand Salle d'Attendre. Aghast. Lance just sails ahead. Leg-hairs waving. Right into Johnny's private sanctum where he's lecturing some bomb-shell on her faulty parallelism.

Afternoon, doctor. Just dropped by to pick up my paper. Like I said.

Yes, yes. Of course. Excuse me, Catharine. Looks like I have another patient. Er... client... er... student.

Oh! O, my! Lance had such broad appeal. Gathering up her shit. Flustered. Flaky. Get out, bitch!

Lance sat down. Knees touching Johnny's on the Clockwork Orange chairs. Babes rumbling in the background. Natives are restless. Excuse me, somebody complaining, but I have somewhere to go. Faintly. Barely audible. Everything muffled by a sudden rush of something. Blood. Those legs! Crazy! A million curves spiraling into the sandals. Those hairs! Returning the paper he brushed them. Against the grain. Like patting a dog. The dog liked it.

Thanks. How'd I do?

I donno. What'd the T.A. write?

Ah, let's see. Ruffling the papers. Spreading those legs. Leaning back. Cumfy Clockwork Orange chair. Ah, shit. Just a B! Fuckin Lez, I guess.

Oh. Well. Let met see that. The door was closed. Turned up the radio. Leaned over. Groped around. For a pencil. HB. Sure enough. Adjusted the grade all right. Only took a minute.

Thanks, doc.

*****

Anytime!

Daubing at his thigh with a Kleenex. Leg hairs stuck together. Icing sugar. Maple donut glaze.

Throbbing in his ears. Then pounding at the door. (Why are they talking so long?) Lance did up his sandals. Taking his time.

Give you a call about the exam.

Sure... sure...

Door opening like the Sun King's at the Grand Levee. Lance leisuredly strolling into the throng of impatient importunate babes. Spotting his own baby among them.

Doing anything? he asks her. Like he can barely afford the time.

Fuck off, she says.

Next! Johnny demanded.

It was the girlfriend. Johnny gave her a C.

For cunt.

*****

Sitting with Johnny one day in a Coffee Shop on Spore Street, frequented mainly by Bermuda-clad retirees with varicose veins, Porko lamented that he had never married. Got a built-in bimbo.

I should have got married, Porko whined. I still should.

Johnny observed the round bald head, the dumpiness, the shopping bag full of paper scraps, the complete Collected Shit of Little Elmer B. Porko, that he always carried with him, in case his Shitty Home apartment got burglarized by a coprophile. Piss on him.

Porko was talking about Harley Timbits. A Fucking Idiot. Old draft-dodger with a bad case of clap. Wouldn't quit before he got a package. Packages again. Had a daughter in an expensive private school. Wanted to send her to a swishy college. Edinburgh. Oxford. He'd do anything for her. Great guy.

Johnny couldn't have cared less where Porko's idiot pals sent their pampered spawn, so long as he didn't have to hear about it. Privileged fucking idiots feeding their fat faces. The common trough not good enough for them.

Porko got mean. Said he hoped Johnny never had to feed his own face.

Bullshit, Johnny said. Everybody knew Porko's Fucking Idiot Troughers were above subsistence living.

Porko said families did the work of the world. They were where it was at. Meaning Johnny was not; he was a faggot. Porko said he was a family values man.

Fucking prick, Johnny said. You really should get married.

Pioneers of Alienation

*****

After six. Johnny exhausted. All those grade appeals. Pointless. Johnny a regular Rock of Gibraltar. Standards! Standards!! A grade at the mighty U of Titz gotta be worth something! At least a blow-job. From Lance, mind you!

Crossing Vagina for a piece at Pizza Slice. Suddenly a big jeep. Four wheel drive. Blaster blazing. Nearly creams him. Throws his arms up in the air. The sodomy ms. goes flying. Eighteenth-century buggery tracts splattered all over the Vagina intersection. Jeep full of studs. Screaming. Fa-a-a-a-a-g-h!

Lance's voice? Not sure. Maybe. Ankles sticking out the window. He thought he recognized them. Asshole! Traitor! Really unacceptable behavior. At a university!!!

O, Lance!

*****

Working late at the Flatt. The E(gg) J(uice) Flatt Library for Dadanian Studies. Under a gigantic full-length laser-on-beaver portrait of the late lamentable Professor Northrope Freed. Father of Dadanian Criticism. The Long Chautauqua. Theosophist. Humanist. Gentleman....

There he squatted, over a typical Dadanian landscape. Crapping the whole country. Starting with the library. Full of his crap already....

They loved him at Vix College. Coprophiles erected statues to him. Out in the courtyard, beside the Massive Tractor Company's Memorial Residence....

Narrow eyes, pointy ears, effete lips....

Everyone's worst nightmare of a perverted uncle....

Translates the Vedas into twenty languages. Christmas Eve eats all the white meat. Fucks your baby sister....

Should've heard him swear! When he let his hair down. With E. J. and the Boys. Henry James a faggot! His Count de Spoonz characters! His stupid rich American widows! Lawrence too! Liked to whip himself!, etc....

They loved him at Vix. His sayings. Vixens should keep their knees together! Wise words, those.

The hard experience of one that didn't....

Busted, if they found out. Never get tenure, at Vix, that little Puritan Bible School....

Abortion! Back alley business....

No more kiddies! She'd always be daddy's girl....

They put his face on postage stamps. Freak! Over the title of his best-selling singular masterpiece!

The Educated Abortionist!!!

*****

Lance Dishlexy and Eric Swaine. Roomies. Working late. Should have been swilling beer on Cardboard Street. Discussing babes. With studs like themselves. Not sitting there under the picture of some fairy. With a lot more fairies....

Lance undid his shirt another button. Turned back the collar. Just so....

Eric leaned backed in his chair. Flexed his shoulders under his T-shirt. Tight across the nipples. Just so....

Already had their shoes off. Same colour army socks. Feet propped on the arborite table-top. Knees up. Trousers hitched up, over hairy ankles....

Frumpy looking lady librarian, passing by. Born-again type, probably hard-up. Wanting it. Them! Ogling, simpering a little as she cleared the tables. Mind on sex. The slut!

Eric kept ruffling the fur on his calves. Lance adjusted his collar, again. Exposing the thick pelt, on his breast-bone.

Study hard now, chirruped the sweet little born-again Vix College nympho-spinster.

Yes, ma'm, Lance promised. Then added sotto voce, slut!

She wants us.

You can say that again, he said. Scratching.

You know, I had just about enough of this, Eric said. Thumping his book.

You can say that again. Hey, I almost forgot, Doc Johnny.

Who?

Ah, this crazy faggot teaches me English. Said I could phone him about the exam.

At home?

No problemo.

No kidding! Describe this guy.

Tall guy. Blond. Scrawny. You know.... A faggot!

Sounds like it. Typical English Department fag. Got a goddam fag factory at No. 7 Thing's College Square. Make 'em like engineers make bitches! Har, har!

Yeah, you can say that again.

Guess what one of them goddamned queens wrote on my Shakespeare paper!

What'd he say!

Said, I don't think so.... Imagine! They call that a man!

Fuckin fag. Hey! What about Johnny? I gotta phone! Now!

I'm gonna tag along. I think I know this guy.

Outside the Egg-Juice Flatt Library they saw Hogwash Hall, still illuminated for late-night Anglican snackers. A gothic battle-ship. Gift of the Massives, of Tractor Company Fame. Light collations within. Cocoa. Nanaimo bars. Lance and Eric swaggered into their adjacent bungalow. Hartley Massive House....

Moored beside Hogwash Hall's Titanic, a cruiser....

Hartley the scion/stud of the Tractor-Massives. In every Hogtonenses yearbook from 1911-1915. (Johnny read them all.) Seated on a ledge under the High Victorian neo-Gothic/faux-Moorish minarets of Old Flagship College. Vacantly smiling, simpering. A large youth in a skimpy track-suit. A footman's brawny legs, broad shoulders. Under the sagging shoulder-strap, the left nipple showed....

Nervous-erect....

Then, nothing.

Johnny hot for him. Ransacking future Hogtenenses, for traces.

An armpit. A nipple. A flesh-tag. Hartley heart-lay....

Nothing. Nowhere. No more. Graduated. Obliterated. Out of the reeking ink-sweaty pages of Hogtonensis. Into the world. The war. The World War....

Swords, to ploughshares, to tractors. to tanks and destroyers.

Unknown soldier. Fart in the wind....

Entering, Eric grabs a bar set into the masonry in the vestibule. Does twenty chin-ups. Just like that, the gorilla....

Athlete! Lance exclaims. Tackles him around his exposed waist. They wrestle on the floor. Smash Vinnie Massive's antique Tiffany presentation-trilight into a thousand shards.

Where'd he find that trash, anyway?

Roll and churn into their study. Under the bronze plaque, the marble mantle-statue. Hartley Slept Here.

Too much scholarship makes men horny.....

Eric on top now. Pulls Lance's denims over his buttocks. Shoves his snout up the crack.

O, funky butt! Funky butt! Thoughts of Hartley drive them crazy.

Fuck. I forgot!

Eh? Eric was seated on the former gubernatorial throne of Vinnie Massive. Gift of the Class of '39. In a pink happy-coat. A Hoppyco Blue Beaver Brew open on the armoir beside him. He belched. Scratched his balls.

Doc Johnny! The exam questions!

So call him now.

It's nearly midnight.

Ah, so what. He handed Lance their princess phone.

Johnny was so startled he dropped his vintage 20s yearbook on the floor. He'd just found an especially juicy swimteam. Very Scott Fitzgeraldian. A bunch of dissipated-looking alkies in short-shorts. Every one a Prince of Wales! Patting the pavement with their bare tootsies outside Flagship College in the middle of February, 1929. Freezing their tits off, as well as their toes. Johnny lost his place.

He-hello?

Hi, Doc. It's Lance.

Why, Lance! How can I help you?

Just wanted to ask you a few questions about the exam.

Fire away, son.

About this poem. Reading Gaol. By Oscar Wilde?

Yes, Lance.

Well, is that right what you said? Was Oscar Wilde really a homo, sir?

Yes, Lance. I'm afraid he was

Gay!

And he went to jail for it?

Afraid so, Lance.

Gosh, sir. That's tough! Just for being a homo. Eric got up and leaned over their waterbed. To listen.

It was tough being a homo, son.

Not like now though. Eh, sir?

Well, ugh ....

About the pronouns, sir.

Ugh, the pronouns?

Yes, sir. You said the whole argument of the poem was in the pronoun shifts. I admit I never quite got your point. Sir. Would you mind going over that again? Sir?

Ugh. Sure, son. It'll only take a minute.

Eric listened. He yawned. They were still talking. Finally, he slept.

Johnnie noticed a handsome young stud. At the back of the class. Trying to get his attention. Wearing short-shorts in January. Not hard to do. Great hairy pillars of Hercules, with the Rocks of Gibraltar.

You wanted to speak to me? Son.

Sir, I just wanted to say....

Yes. Yes?

I just wanted to say what a kind thing that was you did for Lance. Tell him about the exam. And everything.

Well, ugh....

With his condition and everything....

His condition?

You see. Sir. I'm slightly, myself.

Slightly?

Extremely, sir. He blushed. On the brink of tears.

Really?

So I was wondering. Would it be all right. Sir?

Ugh, sure. Give me a call. Anytime. I never really sleep. You know how us English teachers are.

Yes sir. I do.

During the exam Eric put up his hand.

Son?

Sir! Could I speak to you outside. For just a moment. Sir?

Of course. Son.

They stood outside the massive slobber-Gothic gate to the examination chamber of Vix College. Abandaon all hope, ye who enter there!

Sir! You misled me terribly. He burst into tears.

Son?

Who are all those other men, sir? Dryden. Pope. Swift. Who are they? You said to read a few poems by Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Mary Leapor, and Hannah More. That was all!

There, there. Son. That's only context. Strictly pro forma.

Sir, I have to get this course. Sir, if I fail this course I'll have no choice. I'll have to complain.

There, there! Forget all about those nasty men. All about them. Just write about what you know.

All right, sir. Thank you, sir.

*****

Johnny told Porko about a prof at the World's Worst English Department at the University of Montage. She fucked her students.

Disgusting, Porko said. Really shocking abuse of power.

Like Harry Cardigan fucking his mail-boy, Johnny suggested.

One day Johnny and Professor Goldbrick had an argument. Professor Jackie Goldbrick, that is.

Universities were Cultural Continuity, Johnny said.

No, children are, Jackie said.

Should have said fucking, Porko said. Wondering who was stupidest, Jackie or Johnny....

Yeah, fucking your students....

At least if you were married, you got spousal benefits....

*****

Thing Street Asylum

Porko's fantasy. He strides into the BIG HAIRY's Plexiglas sanctum. Post Doctoral Fellow of the School of Hard Knocks. Loser emeritus. Clutching his fat guts under a filthy sweater. Scots Rabelais. Dunce Panurge.

Harry Cardigan marching. Boyish erect. Tum tum. Skipping a beat. No time to grab Rushton Lindburgh from his shelf. Seeing the headline:

Bright Boy
Murdered
by
Rude Civil Servant

Porko moaning. You should have been more careful. Clutching his guts. His liver.

Eh? BIG HAIRY stalling for time. Wondering where he put the revolver.

Why'd you pee on the enamel? Now I gotta dose!

Waving the Luger at Harry's bonnie Scots cardigan. Thinking of his innocent cheeks on the American Standard. Assaulted by BIG HAIRY's body fluids. Hepatitus A to Z. Ambitious spirochetes crying hoopla, as they ascended his spine....

The BIG HAIRY stammered like the blue-eyed neighbor-boy, first time he got his girl in trouble.

Bo-bo-boyoboy. So-so-sorry. Imagining Rushton Lindburgh, Spam Johnson, and Mackenzie Queen attending his wake.

Would they get along?

Sick leave if necessary, but not necessarily, chirped Mackenzie Queen from the book-case. Pince-nez jumping.

Slow rises worth by poverty oppressed, quoth Spam Johnson.

Family values, sighed Rushton Lindburgh.

Harry Cardigan offered him an enormous out of court settlement.

It wasn't enough. Porko shot him.

*****

Later. After the exam. In a bar high atop the Damulife Building. Eric and Johnny and the whole Restoration & Eighteenth-Century class. Boozing. Belching. Cracking jokes.

Hey everybody, shouted Marcus Maybe. He was the great-grandson of the seventeenth prime sinister of Dadania. A film major. Let's throw all short yellow things over the parapet.

Just try it, honky fag, quipped Jah Lo See. Amiably. I'll introduce you to my uncle. He's tall. And he belongs to the Tong!

My boyfriend. I mean my ex boyfriend, Trixie was gossiping. After I poured varsol on his dong....

I'd have poured gasoline in his hot-tub, said her girlfriend.

I'd have lit it, said Jah Lo See.

Sir! Exposing the muff of thick leg-hair between the white elastic of his gym-socks and the cuff of his trousers, Eric put his smelly feet up on the table.

Yes, son.

Sir. I noticed your hair-cut. Sir.

Yes, son.

Well, sir. I was just wondering. Does short hair turn you on? Sir?

Why, son? Do you like it?

Well, ugh ... ugh.... As Eric leapt from the table, smashing glasses and toppling chairs in his confusion, they burst into gales of cruel and boozy laughter.

C.O.N.S.T.A....

It was a great class.

*****

Beaver Day at the Cecil Eatone Café. A favorite of Crap Colostomy. A regular. Maybe they'd meet him just strolling in from the corner of Draine and Bay, where he'd been peddling xeroxed copies of his latest, a big sign at his feet.

A failed writer.

The long counter like a couple of breasts, Porko at neither pap. Last to suck again. Runt of the world's litter.

This time Johnny left first. At home, the phone.

Sorry, all my fault. Porko most apologetic. So busy at M.F.I. He knew he'd gone too far. But huffy.

Johnny said what about Monday, then.

I am engaged, Porko said.

Sure, sure.

No, really. I am.

He really was. He had a dental appointment at three o'clock.

*****

At a Handy Haven. Beggars, losers, down-and-outers. Depressed former civil-servants. Their Ministries turned into casinos and used-car showrooms. Looking for anything to do. Stuffing pages of old newspapers in the lining of their London Smogs. For future reference. Hunting for table-scraps. The week-old plowman's lunch from Wally's canape bar. Tidbits from the last departmental Karaoke. A shrimp. A noodle. From the Boys at No. 7 Thing's College Square. Wally's pals. The tenure-track rat-pack. They didn't make men like that anymore, Trixie mused. Wally's sugarstick!

Trixie Zane exploded from her filthy yellow taxi.

Bitch! Fucker! My money! Where's my money? The driver stuck his whole torso out the window on the driver's side. He was scrambling over the shit-caked roof, scratching and clawing with his nails....

Whore! Floozy! Prof-fucking necro-screw! He smiled inwardly. He outdid himself. He was Joycean!

Fuck you, jerk-off! She drew a long-nailed hand out of the tight space between her smooth spandex panties and her hard abdomen. She had a bun on, and a lot of money. Dadollars! Loonies! Sweet melodies of life itself! She threw them into the gutter. Under the wheels of the taxi. Clitter-clatter!

He squealed with pleasure. He flopped on his belly under the taxi. He lapped at the dollars. The loonies. He rolled in them. He disguised his own stink with their metallic odor. The bums noticed. Nurses. Doctors. Unemployed civil-servants. They dove in on top of him. An orgy!

Keep the change, she said.

*****

The fucking bastards mistook Pal Hal Vantzadick for a computer. Maybe he talked like one and wanted to conquer the world. He was still a human being, even if he was ..... (ahhhh!) ..... DICKLESS!

When Bill Gates got a cream-pie in the geeky puss, Pal Hal wept gummy tears and shook his tight sticky little fist at the assailant's laughing Bozo (c) clown-face on the boob-tube. Fucking bastard!

As the corrupt retro-prophet of pomohomo pop, he made self-fulfilling prophecies. He predicted that in the 90s the whole universe (especially Hogtown's Thing Street ghetto) would become nostalgic for garbage. Because that was all they knew.

He remembered the fatal day of Bill's near liquidation. He said it was just like the Kennedy assassination all over again. He had wanted to open a night-club like Jack Ruby, but his mommy prevented him. She hated the thought of working in her own son's stable. She knew what a lousy pimp he was.

Pal Hal ran out and stole a giant lemon tart from the Thing Street Bunworks. He wheeled it back in the book-rest of his tricycle, like it was the evening pizza-pie. He smashed it on the floor of the apartment. He rolled in the gory fragments. He barked like a bitch in heat. He smacked his gums. They tasted like momma would have made. Too bad she never learned how to cook. Too bad she was a whore.

Fragmentation and nostalgia, he squeaked. Over and over. He carefully chose an especially meaty chunk that had fallen out of the book-rest. It had landed on some day-old Thing Street bum's vomit in the middle of Thing Street. Mmmm-mmmm. He threw it behind the sagging day-bed and scrambled after it. He was doing Zapruder. He was Jackie in the convertible....

He was just getting into the sweetest pair of Ma Vantzadick's 50s-look stiletto high-heels when the neighbors started blasting holes through the ceiling of the apartment below... Through the floor....

He knew exactly how Jackie felt....

*****

It was a mystery how he survived this little contretemps, but the greatest mystery of all was how he ever got anything published. Traitors are always relatively lucky.

Those short short-stories Pal Hal squeezed out of his guts like rabbit pellets didn't even make good fertilizer. On garbage night in Hogtown Mayor Smell the Gasman loved to send his goons over to writers like Johnny or Porko.

Thing Street Asylum

The goons put on baseball caps and started talking like Ph.D.s about the heteroglossia of the shitheap. They always returned from foraging on Thing Street with memoirs and novels stacked up to the lapels of their double-breasted blazers. Nothing less than a novella. They supplied the toilets in Metro Hall. Not to mention the ass-holes.

Unfortunately it was always slim picking with Pal Hal Vantzadick. The goons loitered for hours outside the Cafe Diplomatico, waiting for just a scrap of paper from the Kenneth Clark of deviance (that's Lord Kenneth, if you please!).

He opened one of Ma's old steno-pads and tore off a page of Buffalo City addresses. At the top of the next page he looked down and got vertigo.

At midnight he decided to self-publish by crumpling the page he had written on into a tight little ball and leaving it for his fans beside the dirty cappuccino cup with the soggy biscuitto.

He rose from the table, neglected to pay the waiter at the counter, and snuck off.

Immediately the goons rushed in to see what he had left them. They pealed open the tight paper pod. They grunted like fat wart-hogs. They swore. Rabbit-shit!

Meanwhile, on the curb, Hal the Pal Vantzadick had turned into a cute, little, neutered POMERANIAN. He found a street-person sleeping in a dark doorway. He cocked a hind leg over the pathetic, supine form....

*****

Pal Hal the POMERANIAN never saw the enormous Rottweiler sleeping beside the street-person. It had him between its jaws. It was going to pop Pal Hal's angry zit of a head between its teeth. Suddenly Pal Hal the POMERANIAN reverted to Pal Hal Vantzadick. The Rottweiler immediately recognized the famous writer by his artsy wire-frame glasses and habitually sullen near-death expression. It gagged.

*****

Other vampires regularly transformed themselves into wolves. Pal Hal Vantzadick would have settled for a German shepherd but, when it came to the big dick they were famous for, he always got stuck in mid-transformation. He was afraid that if he forced it he would end up a German shepherd with a hole where its dick should have been, or even a bitch. So he compromised. Life's little compromises made him yappy and mean....

*****

Pal Hal's dick atrophied. One day he was peeing in the washroom of his favorite dough-nut hole when his dick snapped off in his fingers.

A whole mythology sprang up around it. How the punks ran off with it while he was short-changing the waitress at the counter. They wanted it for a stir-stick or a straw only it was too short and thin. They stood in the parking lot, taunting him. He gave them the finger, so they gave him his dick back. It pinged against the window.

The drunks thought it was small change. They got up and staggered outside to see. They were disappointed.

*****

Pal Hal was not the true friend of other writers but really the Judas snitch. He got all the info he could on everyone with talent and sold it to CSIS. If CSIS didn't want it he sold it to the Mounties. If even the Mounties didn't want it he offered it gratis to the Western Front. The writers he sold out were black-listed as commies, fags, and junkies. Pal the Hal was unable even to masquerade as a commie, fag, or junkie. They had talent.

*****

He destroyed Scum Magazine. While other rags printed news that fit, Scum fit all the news. This was unacceptable to Hal the Pal Vantzadick. He knew it was only a matter of time till they printed something about him.

That his good buddy Brado really was Vlado Renfield, who chattered and squealed about life while eating flies and other insects that he trapped with his shit.

Hal the Pal Vantzadick was very particular about the kind of news he made.

Without a dick or talent or even a life of his own, he realized that he himself was one of those pretentious pieces of trash that he nattered so much about. He preferred the constipated confessional form in which he created his own niche market for trash. He was entirely a creation of self-promotion. A marketing technique run amuck. Hal the Pal Vantzadick wasn't even undead. He just wasn't....

Scum magazine knew this. Besides, he had already betrayed several of their gang to the cops. At midnight in their Shitty Home Compartments they heard squeaking and scraping against their windows and supposed it probably was not Robin Redbreast. If they were expecting aristocracy they were equally disappointed. It was not Count Dracula either, but that nasty parvenu traitor no account Pal Hal Vantzadick....

Spying again....

They garnishesh their word-processors with garlic cloves At the Diplomatico they kept little mirrors on the table just in case one of their table-mates was really Pal or Vlado in drag. It became all the rage to cross yourself before sitting down to your espresso and biscuitto. Pal Hal and his entourage started to feel the pressure....

Then contributions to their zine dramatically declined and they only had one bag of names to give to Alapaloozah's goons. Max the Butcher said if they didn't shape up he'd slash their Arts Grant.

It was war!

*****

Johnny's landlord. Citizen Hearse!

With his narrow Italo-Slavo-Irish face, his wire-rimmed glasses, Toscanini mustache, and generally wan and seedy demeanor he resembled a defrocked psycho-analyst. Or the corporate secretary of a fraudulent Northern mining concern. The similarities were striking and too close to tell apart on the basis of physical appearance alone....

A true Dadanian type.

Always in trouble with the authorities.

He would have said on account of his great gusto....

His slum tenement was over budget....

The front door was like the entrance to an imperfectly excavated Egyptian burial chamber in that it was at once sunken, and unearthed. The impression, however, was less monumentality than indecent exposure. It was narrow and made of ply-wood, whereas it had once been double and oak. One descended a short flight of stairs to reach it, to the level of the first-story balconies, that reeked of tenants' cats' piss, drainage, and the lingering flatulence of the Buffer Inn bus.

Why did he have to make it so authentic?

He could have purchased fresh safes from the loco No Frillies, but now he had to personally test each device. On Marion and Trixie and everybody else who volunteered for the Free Trial. In a starched labcoat and a brassiere.

The authorities wanted to see the restored version.... To rate it XXX as soon as they'd seen it themselves....

Johnny's stove was divided in half by a thin ply-wood partition. He had the front burners, his neighbor had the back.... Unfortunately, the neighbor's half had all the knobs....

But Johnny had the oven....

One recent hot summer night the cat couldn't sleep. It sniffed the air. Tail erect. Fur bristling.... Only later the sirens....

The fire-alarm was always ringing in his ears. Johnny felt like Quasimodo....

Sanctuary....

*****

Pal Hal Vantzadick, the world-class zine publisher, had a crypt.

He was really a vampire. He could turn into a bat. Maybe having no blood was like having no talent or no dick. Maybe being undead and untalented and dickless were just different facets of not being. Sometimes he thought about it himself. There was no comparison.

But he had other vampire characteristics. Like an inability to read or write more than 500 words (2 pages) at a time. This was the same as the vampire's inability to stray more than a few miles from his crypt without getting lost; any vampire not in his coffin by sunrise was incinerated. When the rosy-fingered dawn scrawled rude graffiti at the other end of Thing Street and Pal Hal found himself more than 2 pages from the beginning of his article he felt like his brains were beginning to fry and his head would explode if he didn't find some way to finish. So he always suicided his protagonist....

His favorite device was dynamite which one of his characters always mysteriously hid in a pizza box or a coke can or up his ass.

The cool protagonist in wire-rim glasses and cape lights up a joint before he fucks his recumbent Goth-girl friend. He is just mentally remarking her striking resemblance to his long-lost childhood boyfriend Brado, and noting with delight that she even has a.... when a spark from a bursting seed ignites the conflagration. Everyone is barbecued and dies because of the meaninglessness of life.

Life's meaningless barbecue is meat for a genius like Pal Hal Vantzadick.

Thing Street Asylum

*****

Johnny couldn't sleep for thinking what if everyone in his apartment building was barbecued like the characters in a Pal Hal Vantzadick story. And he (Johnny) was responsible! Burnt to a crisp. The death of the author! So he called the Fire Department. They came right over. Big tall fucker pounding at the door. Johnny let him in. This way, my Cap-i-tan!

Showed him the basement. The alarm box. Still disconnected! If there was a fire they'd be burnt in their beds. Johnny could be charged. So he snitched.

He'd complained and complained. Begged Citizen Hearse on hands and knees. Please! O please boss, reset the alarm. Think of the children!

Citizen Hearse set him up. Wanted the place burnt down. Johnny inside! For the insurance! The officer stared at him. Pathetic liar! Now Johnny hated the authorities himself.

*****

For one year it was obvious that Johnny was being fired by the Mighty U of Titz, notwithstanding that he was the teacher. They short-listed less qualified things to teach his specialty. They hired some out of town tart with an Oxford degree. They didn't even offer him a summer job. So far as they were concerned, Johnny could starve to death.

Porko savored the process. Smeck myum myumm.

How Johnny wasn't even short-listed for his specialty. Mmm.

How only one of the candidates even had a Ph.D. or a Significant Publication.

How before a scheduled talk by one of the candidates, Johnny protested the decision of the Hiring Committee by distributing a letter to each of the guests. Mmm.

Faces falling as the Associate Chair's principal lackey excused himself to call security. Mmmm mmm.

How Johnny made his getaway, bridges burning, his career a ship sinking a ruined city smoking behind him. Mmm mmm mmm.

Porko gobbled it all. Like a novel. Or a Marvel Comic. At least it was better than the soft porn he was always reading.

He said he was really sorry. Fucking bastards. Should've given him a job.

Porko acted like Johnny was losing his mind. Didn't wanna leave him alone. Invited him for dinner at the Arab Joint. Higher-class than Bug-Eye Birdie's. Shawarma chicken. Yum yum.

Terrible thing to do to a chicken, though.

Worse than the Colonel, those A-rabs. Har har.

Crossing the overpass where College became Dungass West. Said the thing that upset him almost as much as Johnny's not getting the job, was that he seemed to think he was enjoying it.

Might as well face it, he was. Johnny could see the humor of the situation himself. Even if he couldn't exactly appreciate it.

He should've known. Did know. The creeps he wanted a job from were the same creeps that taught him. Whom he knew were creeps. Who knew he knew.

Sorry to do this to you, JOHNNY!

Shawarma chicken! Terrible thing to do to a career.!

*****

Porko called him up, just to see if he'd been fired yet.

Are you completely through at the U of Titz? Are yuh? Are yuh really? Really really through?

Even appearing to hesitate was reason for Porko to gloat. So he answered him as cautiously as he could, knowing that Porko was feeling him up over the phone.

I can still type, he said.

C.O.N.S.T.A..... N....

*****

Porko invited him for a hamburg at Harvey's lunch. On him in case Johnny couldn't afford it. Gloating.

Pioneers of Alienation

Johnny went to the corner of Draine and Wormslitherry, near Porko's old pad, a one-room apartment in a failed housing project. Shamestown. Only a year ago it had been conveniently located, since his office had been on the same corner. Before the era of a thousand cuts.

Now the Fucking Idiots waddled and farted in spanking new premises in the Cecil Eatone Centre. Sean loved the shopping.

Johnny regarded the abandoned building, partially converted to condominiums. Ugly, black, boarded-up.

Signs hung over the high lobby windows, advertising wall-to-wall broadloom, sunken ceilings, French balconies. He wondered what the fuck they meant by Frog balconies.

It was Citizen Hearse, all over....

Porko surpised him, thinking aloud. Finally. Hoped he hadn't kept Johnny waiting. Sure, sure.

Bad air, Porko observed. Sneaking up behind him. Asbestos. Hard to imagine anybody wanting to pay a few hundred thou to live in that shit-heap. Gives yuh cancer!

They passed the Youth of Dadania, two women and a man, begging on top of a big concrete planter, full of dog shit.

Give us a quarter? Porko gave them a loony. Show-off.

Things living in the expensive condos would have to pass them every day. Some neighborhood. They turned north.

Army surplus stores, pizzerias, Handy Havens, Buggah Thangs. They stopped in front of what appeared to be a combination pizzeria and bakery. The pizzas displayed in the window looked hybrid, with pieces of meat and fruit.

It was new, so they entered.

Could I just have a slice please, Porko asked.

Of course. Which one? She was Philippino. Very sweet.

That one, maybe.

The Hawaiian, she said. With ham. I'll heat it up. Yummm.

I'll have a slice of the same, Johnny said. She put two slices of Hawaiian in the microwave. In a few seconds they were ready. Where are you sitting? They went to a table at the back. She followed them, their slices on separate paper plates.

Would you like anything to drink?

A coffee.

The same, please.

I'm making it fresh. I'll bring it over as soon as it's ready.

They'll never make it, Porko observed.

She said she'll bring it right over.

The business. They're too nice for the Draine.

The man sitting opposite them looked like a spy. The long tinted hair. Wary eyes. Slight build. Pencil-thin mustache....

So you're all through at the U of Titz, he resumed, sotto voce.

So far as I know. They said there was some possibility of work later this summer....

Yeah? How much?

Zero degree....

He had distributed a letter, protesting the exclusion of his name from the short-list. He had distributed some copies in the hall before the first candidate's seminar; when he tried to leave a small stack on the long table in the seminar room, a professor cowering behind the door complained in a fake English accent: We down't wahnt enny in he-ah.

I've decided to start teaching myself, Porko announced.

O yeah? I'm a teacher too, you know. I have experience. Porko at his meanest.

Yeah? Where did you teach?

Crap College, Porko said. Proudly.

Full-time?

No, part-time.

Literature?

No, composition. The Philippino woman brought them their coffee.

O yeah? Johnny knew better than to ask him why he quit....

*****

On the MILQUETOAST BROADCASTING COMPANY. A series about How I Got Here. Trixie raving.

How she arrived from Sicily in a hot-air balloon. Only disappointment: inability to go scuba diving in Winnipeg.

Sodskie recommended the Assiniboine.

Old Man River?

Lies! Johnny knew her when she was a TEMP!

Then, Butch! Discussing the first dance music he ever reviewed. Giselle!

Thing Street Asylum

How many ballets had he attended in his professional lifetime?

Three million!

He'd come a long way from the condo over the Nuts Store.....

All-time favorite ballerina?

Veronica Tenant! Tchaikovsky! Her Sleeping Beauty! At the Blue Beaver Centre. The way she humped that radiator!

Butch played some Tchaikovsky. Sobbing orgasmic slobber. Artistic as a shot wad. Jockey set loved it. Got them in the mood.

Butch was getting pretty worked up over a third-rate Russian composer. You could hear the fervor. For Tchaikovsky the Super Fag! Almost as big a loser as Oscar Wilde!

Ken Russell made that fine movie about him. That fine director. That decadent court. That nasty Rubinstein. Hypocrites! As if they weren't all fags themselves.

In the back-seat of a run-away troika. Careening through snowy Steppes. The word speeding even faster across the Empire. Greatest Ruskie Composer fleeing public humiliation. A smack in the face in a public place from a Romanoff hand that had done worse things than stroke a balalaika. Pa-the-tique!

Butch went out of control. Flouncing around the studio. Sitting on the microphone. Like Noel Coward at Vegas.

All this on Johnny's transistor. With the vibration of the fridge. The traffic. The periodic mild earthquake of the Thing Streetcar. Brief wind-born passages of wild drumming from the Native Friendship Detox on the corner. Voices on the veranda. Doors slamming. Leaves rattling. Against the dusty dumpster.

*****

Handy Havens at either end of Thing Street. Selling their infamous shag-burghers. Just like Trixie Zane used to make. With Wally. In Prostitution Studies!

Shag-burghers! Gristle and fur-balls from the small-animal road kill that the bums farmed off the Hardener Distressway and other arteries.

Sometimes a bum became road-kill himself. His pals farmed him too.

Beside Handy's Shag-Joint was an old tin-roofed Victorian Bank. Under the pollution you could still read the legend: Bank of British North America. It even had a little dome.

Johnny went in to use the automatic teller. There was a man sitting on the floor in the corner.

Spare a loony? he asked.

Johnny shifted so the man couldn't read the number Johnny entered on the electronic key pad. Johnny glared at him. The man needed a shave and a bath.

The ladies said I could sit here, the man started to explain. The money machine began to roar. The man had to shout over the noise. So long as I don't bother nobody.

Johnny pocketed his money and removed his card and the deposit slip from their respective slots. The machine stopped bleating.

In the startling silence Johnny gazed down at the man. He thoughtfully stuffed the fat wad into his pocket. It felt good rubbing against his cock.

The man looked up. The man's eyes were pleading. Johnny experienced an epiphany. For the first time Johnny saw like a Hogtonian. The man wasn't human. He was a bum.

Johnny kicked him in the face for bothering him.

Sonny!? He didn't recognize him....

*****

Porko and Johnny in their favorite sandwich shop. Johnny complaining. As usual. How he couldn't get a job.

Porko asks him for his current fax number. Johnny suspicious. What for? The Hell Telephone Co.? Just like being there?!? Johnny remembered the last time Porko nearly turned him in. Afraid the bailiff would seize his computer. Big tizzy! Johnny assured him. Computer worthless!

No, Porko explained. Maybe he'd have a job for him. Painting with Hotsy Scotsy. Hotsy's current helper no good. Crazy.

Johnny considered. He was going crazy himself.

O well, Porko observed. Hotsy's crazy. I'm crazy. But this guy! Told Hotsy's employer to hire somebody else. A bigger outfit. Said theirs was too small for the job. Won't follow orders. Hotsy told him to paint around the toilet tank. So he removes the toilet tank anyway. Had a water-colorant. Colored water sprays everywhere. Had to repaint the whole bathroom.

Johnny suggested maybe this helper could have an accident.

Porko said this helper more likely to cause one. Big guy. Why Hotsy hadn't fired him already.

Pioneers of Alienation

*****

Johnny finally got a letter. It went like this:

Dear BOY

In future, when applying for positions in the department of which I am honored to be the head, kindly remember to always address me using the appropriate courtesy title, according to the protocols established for all tenured Civil Servants by His Late Excellency and Chancellor, Joachim von Ribbentrop.

Frankly, I was slightly offended by the tone of your latest communique, in particular the informality of the salutation: i.e. HEIL, YOU NAZI THUG!

Only my closest associates are permitted to address me so informally.

My friends, out of courtesy, call me....
DOCTOR!

Get it, YOU CHEEKY LITTLE HIMIE FAG?

******

Porko was desperate to leave, but under the New Legislation he could not afford to. If one quit one's job, one got no unemployment benefits; it was that simple. Before the new legislation, it would have been possible to get benefits five weeks after quitting. Now, never.

This meant that a poor man had to work for his employer forever or until his employer freed him, at least if he wanted to collect benefits. If a poor woman quit because of sexual harassment, she still might not get her benefits. First she would have to convince a jury at the Dole Office that there really was such a problem at work, and that required witnesses, none of whom would be eager to testify. And if the jury were male, its decisions would be biased.

Porko was obviously (?) not a woman, and sexual harassment was none of his concerns. He was fat, obese even. He was bald, and his teeth were bad; perhaps it would be no exaggeration to write that his gums were bald too, or nearly. Just as what remained of his hair had turned white long ago, what remained of his teeth had faded, only in the opposite direction, from white to yellow. Physically, he was a mess.

Sartorially, he was a worse mess. Once one of his ties came apart in his fingers as he attempted to tighten the knot. Once he had been asked to leave a deposit with his laundry, in case it disintegrated or he never bothered to reclaim it, since it wasn't worth the cost of cleaning.

Still, he always wore a tie. Not wearing one would have been a good way to get fired, but getting fired was no longer such a good idea. As far as the Dole Office was concerned, getting fired was as bad as quitting.

Thus, he could neither quit nor be fired, and receive benefits. He wanted to receive benefits so he would neither quit nor get himself fired. Thus, they would have to let him go or, in other words, terminate the position; they would fire the job, not the worker.

So nothing changed at Porko's Job.

*****

Johnny was afraid of missing the train. Everything depended on catching it. Thirty bucks extra if he had to take the noon train. Then he'd miss his rendez-vous with Madame Marta, his landlady. He had to meet her at her apartment at 1:30, in the downstairs of the same ornate bay-windowed building on Esplanade where he had met her the last time, with his watches. He had hoped to find work in Hogtown, which he had found, but not for much money, or for very long.

He had had one month more to go on his lease, but had wanted to save his money for his trip; therefore, in her huge stone-fronted pewter-filled parlor over-looking the iced-over tennis courts of Parc Jeanne Mance, he had offered her a few pieces from his collection: an old Illinois pocket-watch with a hand one had to remove the glass to move, and a Bulova wrist-watch, nearly as old.

Don't you have anything for a woman? she had asked.

I'm afraid that's all.

So what about the one you're wearing? She had tapped his wrist: a small, square, gold-plated man's Elgin dress watch. On the back it had been engraved: Best of Luck, E. J., 1939. A going-away present, for someone who never returned from WW II?

Johnny had liked the watch, but he had seen what she meant: small enough for a woman. He had handed it to her across the inlaid coffee-table. And she had written him a receipt for the last month's rent.

Thing Street Asylum

*****

They were M.F.I., Money Funds International, which Porko unkindly called More Fucking Idiots. He had his reasons.

No doubt they were reasons, but even if they hadn't been, he would have had reasons of his own.

First, he'd had so many bad jobs, which he called shit jobs, before he came to M.F.I., that he sometimes had difficulty perceiving his (usually very temporary) colleagues, as other than more of what really were, or necessarily appeared to be, idiots. He realized, of course, that they might not be, and that he might have mistaken for idiots what was really the condition of idiocy. Others called it The New Order.

In this condition, everything became shallow.

*****

There was the Irish-Dadanian receptionist, crippled and with a wife who beat him. He usually sat behind the desk in the reception area. As a matter of fact, he was always sitting.

Once when his wife assaulted him he had to call the cops. When she ordered them to get her a cab, they told her to use the pay-phone across the street.

Fucking bitch, she heard them mutter sotto voce. They hated women who beat their husbands. What did she think they were?

A hotel?

The police photographed Sean's bruises, black and blue all up and down his hairy thighs where Norah had kicked and pinched him. They told him, next time he felt romantic about Norah, just take a good look at his pecs. At what she did to him.

Bitch!

When Sean finally left her, Porko and some of the other Fucking Idiots helped him move: an enormous heavy dining-room table, a commode, a heavy four-poster bed, a buffet like a giant's coffin, etc. They were all appalled when, a few months later, Sean decided to reunite with Nora.

He loved the bitch.

He believed in marriage.

They moved back all his junk

*****

This time Johnny could pay cash. At least for the first month. After that was long range planning. Vague futurity.

But first he had to meet Marta. As arranged.

He had obtained her number from old Barganzo who still had a second-hand shop on The Main. She didn't remember him. He reminded her: The watches! Then she remembered: Yes, yes!! Of course, the watches. He was afraid she'd hold them against him, which wasn't the case. To the contrary. She wanted more. Even if it meant having Johnny for a tenant. All over again....

She had two apartments either one of which he could rent from her quite cheaply: one on St. Denis for three-forty and another on St. Hubert for three-ten a month. But the one on St. Hubert was all-included: heat, lighting, hot water. Which, considering the bundle he owed Hydro-Quebec and Gaz Metropolitain, was a big consideration.

He had been very clear about the terms of their deal. He would come down by train on Tuesday, he would meet her at 1:30 at her house on Esplanade, she would take him directly to see the apartments and, provided there were no gaping holes in the walls or broken windows etc., he would rent one of them immediately, paying cash.

Later Porko suggested that Marta would have known that he was broke.

*****

This was the New Age. News of celebrities was everywhere, but thanks to Sean and Nora, Porko payed special attention to the stories of Simpson O'Jay. A truly world-class spouse beater. Celtic like Nora, in a year when a Celt won the Nobel Prize. Forget your Celtic Twilight nonsense; this was Celtic high noon.

Simposn O'Jay became Nora's secret hero. She had his picture on her desk. In a silver frame. Porko imagined Sean asking his newly reunited wife why. Her pregnant silence. He would know soon enough.

It was the New Age. Sean would soon be unable to get Wheel Trans, the special transportation facility of Hogtown Transit, thanks to the austerity measures of the new Junta. Soon Sean would be unable to attend an opera, a concert. He would be a virtual shut-in. So would Norah. They would never get along. The poor had to live more simply, for middle-class peace and prosperity. Tighten their belt, till their hips caved in.

Pioneers of Alienation

Pity the middle-class, those sons of bitches.

This was the New Age. Sean liked to read on break. He would sit (what else?) in his wheel-chair with a book on the latest New York Times best-seller list. Preferably something by a world-class feminist. Maybe Camille Paglia! He would read every word. Religiously.

Porko wanted to give him a biography of the great Divine to read, a real star, not one of your New Age parvenus. Porko would just skim through such a book, looking for juicy passages about Divine's glutinous sex-life, or salty indications that the biographer really hated his gross pig of a subject. But Porko knew Sean would read every word. Religiously.

Porko wondered what Sean's religion was.

*****

Leaving was a shock to Johnny's system.

His alarm went off at five in the morning but he must have gone back to sleep for a few minutes because when he finally got up it was already a quarter past.

He had packed his knapsack the night before. Now he shoved the cat into his traveling box. It was like stuffing a pipe, or loading a canon. If he'd opened the door then, the cat would have gone off, like fire works.

He typed a note to the Chinese landlord.

Was he Citizen Hearse with his eyes taped up.... Or Chuck Handy.... Or Lon Chaney, Jr.....

He was the man behind the mask, of Fu Manchu....

He had a thousand disguises....

They were all the same....

Johnny complained about the hard times which forced him to abandon his apartment.

Flitting like this was best, for all of them....

The neighbors upstairs let their brats run wild, dripped water on Johnny through the ceiling, kept him up late at night with loud salsa music, and did everything in their power to make him miserable.

Still, it was a noble act....

At least now they would be happy.

Finally he wrote the landlord that he could keep the combined last month's rent and safety deposit, which was all he was interested in.

He left a lot of things, but no watches....

*****

Porko was Harry Cardigan's Pink Slip Fairy. He delivered love and roses from THE BIG HAIRY itself. The kiss-off from the Business Manhandler at More Fucking Idiots. Making them Fewer Fucking Idiots.

Wy Ching had to go. So did Maria Singh.

All the slants and browns, Harry said. Because they had to do Desk-Top Publishing and they didn't know how. Porko thought they might have learned.

Harry was indignant. If Queen Victoria had had balls, she might have been king.

And Charlie? Porko wanted to know.

*****

Johnny headed out with his knapsack slung over his shoulder and the cat in his carrying case in his left hand. It was raining and very cold for late April. Appropriate weather for leaving Hogtown, he thought. He set the cat down on the walk right outside his basement apartment, turned, and locked the door. But this time he left the key. The old lady, the landlord's mother perhaps, who shared the house with Johnny and the salsa-dancing neighbors, would find it on her way out at eight o'clock. When he would already be on his way.

He prudently decided not to wait with his cat at the street-car stop right in front of his house, in case granny saw him flitting, and notified the Tong....

If the salsa-dancers saw him they would certainly tell, if only in revenge for his complaining so often about their noise and occasionally, he admitted, cutting off their hydro....

Unfortunately, no street-car lumbered immediately to a stop on College, so he decided to walk to the next subway stop. Buffer Inn Road.

The cat felt heavier. It was growing.

*****

Thing Street Asylum

Just before 6 A.M., under the massive pile of the Hotel, Unity Station was beginning to stir. Everyone looked half stoned.

Johnny bought a coffee at a kiosk, where he overheard the man behind the counter rudely refusing to make change for a handsome, wasted-looking man, as if the man and his money were both infected with some deadly contagion.

Brad! He didn't recognize him....

A few moments later Johnny observed the same man with a similarly ravaged friend, skulking towards the marble urinals of the east wing.

He didn't recognize Bruce either....

He sipped his coffee, and improved. Enough to notice a tired, disheveled man half-reclining in a marble alcove behind a Travelers' Aid kiosk. Then he saw a couple of station police, right on cue, notice the sleeper as they strolled by. One of them officiously rapped the marble wall with his baton. The sleeper thrashed about like a jerked marionette, and glared. The cops chortled. One could sit but not sleep.

Johnny never realized. It was Tony....

It was ten minutes to seven and the baggage room had not opened yet. Johnny began to worry that he would not be able to check the cat and board his train when he was supposed to at 7:10. He wondered if he should try to board the train with his cat right now. He imagined the scene, himself trying to push past some indignant Vile official. After all, they had told him there would be time.

A man in a neatly-pressed white shirt, with the Vile insignia on his breast-pocket, strolled towards the baggage-room, then swore when he noticed the cat.

Baggage! How dare he?

Look, Johnny said, noticing the Vile insignia. I have to catch a train.

All right, all right, he said, walking even more slowly and fumbling for his keys. He flicked a switch inside the door, and the neon lights pulsed on.

Fiat lux.

At the counter he glanced scornfully at Johnny's extended ticket.

You should be aware that you are supposed to travel with the pet. Your train doesn't have a baggage car, so the cat will have to go on the noon train.

Look, I already checked it out with not one but two of your colleagues, and they said there would be no problem. I don't a need a lecture.

I don't need YOU!

Johnny was going to say he didn't need him either, but changed his mind; it wasn't true.

*****

Rushton Lindburgh. The New Age Spam Johsnon. Harry Cardigan loved him. He had deposed Kahil Gibran, his Prophet since he was fourteen. Harry would march singing Glory, Glory and, without skipping a beat, bring down Lindburgh's Latest from the shelf, where it squatted beside Spam Johnson's Selected Prose and Mackenzie Queen's Life and Loves:

My daddy lived to be ninety-three. Munching Doritios till 2 every morning. He never got hardening of the arteries. Yeah .... So much of this junk is hereditary. [You are listening to The Best of Rushton Lindburgh. Here's Rushton Lindburgh. America Held Hostage.]

Hillary Clinton said there are things bigger than us. I knew that that was the thrust of it. The Passion of St. Hillary. Here is Hillary Clinton. When we're bombing the [beep] outa some mosque, all she wants to know is what that old cleaning lady inside is gonna to do for a living .... Now some [beep beep] caller wants to know if I'm the White Louis Farakhan. The WHITE LOUIS FARAKHAN!!!

[Beep] you!

*****

Vile Rail was worse than ever. Instead of the traditional complementary stale sandwich all one got was a cup of stale coffee. Or a coke. The coke was fresh.

For most of the trip the seat next to his was empty, but at Thingstown a woman boarded and sat down beside him. He had seen her coming. The others either found an unoccupied seat or one beside someone who at least looked affable, or they journeyed on into the next car. But their eyes met, so she paused and enquired in a faintly indignant voice if the seat beside him was taken. It wasn't, so she took it, with a surly air.

Johnny considered that he should have expected that at Thingstown, a nice little Anglo Saxon town with all the amenities: a university, a military college, a penitentiary, and an asylum.

Pioneers of Alienation

Johnny wondered how many court-martialed soldiers and underemployed Ph.D.'s worked as security guards at the the pen till they turned criminal and wound up in the pen themselves, or went insane and got committed....

He'd already met a lot of criminally insane things in Thingston, at a meeting of an outfit that had been set up by the late great Norrie Freed. He called it O.B.T.U.S.E., for Organization of Blessed Teachers of Uplifting & Serious English.

Johnny knew it really stood for Old Bitches Teaching Us Shit Especially. A big disaster for Johnny.

He had written various leaders of the gang about being nice to scholars like him: free membership, free travel, plenty of cash prizes....

Like him, but not HIM.....

One gangster would have thrown his beer in Johnny's face, but he loved beer even more than he hated Johnny....

The alky!

He'd based his whole career on a lousy edition of William Cowper, a secret-sinner if there ever was one....

Then Johnny rented a room in Thingstown through some sort of bread-and-breakfast scam, run by a gang of loco thugs. Inadvertently in the same house as his thesis director. Doc Dildo Wingnut was already thick with them.

Ole Doc Dildo Wingnut showed Johnny's landlady how to concoct the preposterous lie that a Russian Nobel Prize Laureate studying at Thing's U had taken the room for a year. The whole thing stank of Dildo Wingnut, World's Worst Thesis Director and Liar Extraordinary.

Doc Dildo even said he never got a rotten teaching evaluation. The ones he got from Johnny alone numbered in the tens of thousands. With such admonishments as, For the love of humanity, shoot yourself, bastard....

Evil Fucker Dr. Dildo Wingnut. All the way from Montage U to Thingstown, Dadania. When he wasn't cracking anti-fag jokes, he was lying....

He even told the gang how much his grad students adored him. With Babyface Marjoram's latest hate letter in his pocket.

Johnny had seen one of the Face's productions, taped to the inside of Dildo's favorite urinal, right outside the Chairman's Office, like Luther's Theses, a masterpiece of protest literature: Please, please impeach Dildo Wingnut, Professor and Chair. After he refused to give me a B for blowing him, I realized he was homosexual. The only thing he really taught me was, use a condom next time I take a English course. He concluded magnificently: I pray God he gets his act together.

Amen, thought Johnny. The landlady's teenage son, a handsome stud watching the sports channel naked in the next room, offered Johnny his room, if he didn't mind a few hunky football posters on the wall.

Johnny nearly accepted. The handsome stud really got the score right that time. Touchdown! The old fuck bursting a vessel under the throbbing ceiling as they buggered one another, turn and turn again. But he had wanted out of that thieves' den.

Thingstown! Saturday night the whole downtown was one big noisy drunken brawling Anglo Saxon beer parlor. Pitooey!

He wished he could have opened the window and spat on the platform. Or timed a meaty-crap just right, so he could have dropped the reeking load right in front of the station....

*****

When he saw the dilapidated backyards of St. Henri, the decaying stone flanks of the Lachine Canal, the towers of Montreal, he felt like crying.

Home!

It was raining when he got off the train, but he still wanted to walk. Everything seemed cheaper, but more fun. Even poor things were eating out in little Delicatessens and Cafés on St. Catharine Street. He decided he would go where he knew there had been a cheap restaurant, on Mount Royal at Parc, and eat there if it were still open.

He was soaking wet, but the restaurant was open.

Salut! said a handsome young Greek in a white apron.

Welcome to Montreal.

*****

Porko's great masterpiece went like this. Only it was no fiction. It really happened.

A drunk is driving too fast down a dark road near Hogtown. He hits a man staggering along the shoulder. The driver stops. The man dies. The driver removes the man's wallet, and discovers from the papers inside that he is Alapaloozah, Grand Vizier and Premier Ass-Hole of Dadania.

The driver has slain the chief executive and operating officer of Dadania!

Assassin!

In the process of picking his victim's other pocket he cannot help noticing his likeness to himself.

The driver, incidentally, is Porko.

A handsome man, even if wasted by booze. Striking good looks. A real card, too.

A plot forms in the driver's mind. This plot thickens too somewhat. Constricts like a boa around the neck.

One could hang one's self reading a Porko story. Or just throw up.

Throw? Throes? Porko was thinking.

Now who was it who said he wanted to throw a Molotov cocktail up the ass of the premier ass-hole of Dadania, bankrupt jobber of Dadania? And who requested the singular privilege of lighting it? Imagine all that semi-digested steak-and kidney ingested for the cameras in the McDonald Block, proof of this man's being of things, splattered.

Who was it?

Of course! Hulk Hogan. The office Trotskyite at M.F.I. Published The Trotskyite Awakening on their photo-copier. Along with Porko's masterpieces. For Porko considered himself a greater genius than Trotsky!

Porko got a can of gas out of the trunk and removed a bottle of whiskey from the glove compartment. He stood for a moment over the corpse of the Premier Ass-Hole of Dadania, gas in one hand, booze in the other.

What a shame. What a waste. Security companies needed thugs like that.

Porko set the heavy gas container upon the ground. He unscrewed the top of the whiskey bottle and took a big swig to steel himself for the night's work ahead. It felt good. He felt fine. Maybe there was a god after all. He took another swig. Now he was convinced. He poured some upon the gravel in case God was thirsty.

Cheers, he said.

Nobody could tell it from what normally came out. A few ass-holes suspected. It was those commies again.

*****

When Johnny got up in the morning he cleaned the coffee-grounds out of the Russell-Hobbs percolator, replaced them with freshly ground coffee from a white paper bag, filled the percolator with very cold water and plugged it in.

It began to make rude noises.

He dressed himself, which meant pulling a pair of black jeans over his briefs, tucking in his T-shirt, and putting on socks and shoes.

He poured the black liquid from the stainless-steel spout of the Russell-Hobbs, into a glass stein (originally for root-beer) that he had purchased from the Salvation Army. He quaffed most of it, but not all. He wanted to go for a walk.

In his black leather jacket, his knapsack slung over his back, he was astonished to discover, between the street and the little vestibule he shared with a neighbor, what seemed like a small lake of water at the bottom of the concrete steps. At first he thought there had been a blockage in the drain that he supposed emptied into the street sewers, so he took a piece of old molding that the carpenters had left in the vestibule and moved it around in a hole in the concrete where the water would have to flow. He got no results, except the discoloration of the little lake.

He decided to speak to the concierge. Reluctantly he rang his bell, beside a door identical to his own, on the opposite side of the building. The old man emerged almost too quickly, as if he was always ready to answer his tenants' needs, and (more likely) they were always needy.

In bad French Johnny said, Il y a l'eau dans l'entrée.

In better English, the concierge asked, So what am I supposed to do about it? After all, it was raining.

In even worse French Johnny asked, Est-ce qu'il y a un outil ou quelque chose que je peux utiliser pour vider le trou.

At that the concierge gave up. O. K. Attends un instant. Je vais vous montrer quelque chose.

He led Johnny back into his own apartment, to a wooden door near the floor in the hallway to the bathroom. He had a flashlight with him, and pointed it into the dark, reeking space. Regardez. That's water. When it rises outside, it rises inside. Johnny stared into the darkness till he could distinguish the water, shimmering in a wooden frame under an old piece of pipe. There used to be a pump, the concierge remarked. During the ancien regime, Johnny supposed.

The concierge placed some plastic ice-cream buckets on the floor. He dropped to his knees and began to fill the large buckets with water that he drew with the smaller one. Johnny got the idea. Hewers of wood, drawers of water. Montreal was sinking. Like Venice.

They carried the full buckets into the kitchen and emptied them down the sink. They did this for nearly half an hour, when the concierge suddenly stopped drawing, rose, and headed out the door.

Lunch! he said. Anyway, let's wait an hour for the water to come back. At the door he pointed at the lake and shouted, Look! She's going down! She used to be up to here. He pointed to a mark high up on his crotch, where she really might have been once.

*****

The homosexual foreplay in those Tiffany Finelay novels Deane was always reading. Right after communion at St. James Cathedral. Exlax with a meal. The Common Prayer and The Whores. The novel with the pretty roses on the cover. Rose-petal Anglican swill! Big among the crank class.

Dogs whose ears resembled jaunty caps, horses which in chummy fashion all wanted to go together. Facts that had to be fictionalized into truth, and plenty of reflexive allusions to other sources, like tape recordings, photographs of Bruce leaping naked on horse-back out of a burning barn, etc. Every pomo cliche. Pure Disneyworld.

Those uniformly beefy English studs made Porko jealous! Tiffany was a bit too obsessed with a certain idealized physical type. Drawn from a single class, reflecting a correspondingly narrow range of sympathies. What about poor working stiffs? Like Porko!

A pretty, fucking, shallow treatment of the greatest global catastrophe ever. Stupid narcissistic authorial onanism over a factory-rich Massive, a wanker, the very kind of brainless, Boys' Own Annual, upper-class wanker that started the fucking mess in the first place. And this piece of shit is canonized as the Great Dadanian War Novel.

Holy shit! We LOST!!!

*****

Porko and Deane. Together!

Deane said Bishop Hanke Panky read Tiffany regularly.

Who?

Tiffany Finelay, stupid! Hanke Panky admires him stupendously.

I'm sure.

The book! The BOOK!!

Well, it's not surprising. We all know about Panky. Don't we?

Buggering the cute male members of the congregation as soon as it was legal.

Midnight. Lance Dishlexy's eighteenth birthday. Panky looking at his watch.

Twelve-o-one and WHAMMO! Forget the Gulf and its Mothers. This one's a heat-seeking Exocet from the See of Galilee.

Lance had communed, but not like this before.

O, stop! You're talking about a Man of God! A Member of the PONTIFICAL INSTITUTE!

It's true. Porko conceded. It happens to women all the time. It's never any BIG DEAL. But why does Panky have to stand up in front of the entire PRAYER BOOK SOCIETY, and denounce all homosexuals as criminals....

Old Hegelians from Palooza U. declaring themselves PRO PANKY. Because they're ANTI GAY! Giving him a STANDING OVATION as he invites the VATICAN to move all their choir-boys and other sacred art-works to Lummoxville, Quebec. Where he's lecturing on the spiritual significance of Caravaggio's bum.

I have to confess. Porko conceded. I don't understand the Anglican Religion.

By then they'd have at least their shirts off. For heavy petting. (Just being affectionate!)

Deane was getting a gut. When he sat up in bed there were little wrinkles up and down his abdomen. From which a wick of hair descended into his briefs. A damp squib.

Deane had a little bush growing there. Porko liked to flatten it with the palm of his hand.

His back was hairier too. Though not as hairy as his chest. Where the hair sprouted like long grass around and immediately below his nipples. On his breastbone. Around his neck. Peaking out from under his arms. It even grew on the tops of his shoulders. On his back it was almost as high as his chest hair. Making it (almost) as interesting to massage.

Then, of course, there were his arms and legs. Covered with black hair. Long and sparse on his fore-arms. Short and thick on his legs.

Like branches, veins and sinews showing under thin bark....

Deane quivered as Porko slid his hand higher up his torso. Brushing his nipples. Hardening under his finger-tips. There, and there. Thinking of all the men he'd seen or imagined. Being. With. Deane.

Deane murmuring. Eyes closed. Asleep.

Thing Street Asylum

Sorry to do this to you, JOHNNY!

Eat your heart out, Johnny Boy.

*****

That winter in the Literary Club at Vix College, Deane wore lumber-jack shirts, the sleeves rolled up to his hairy pits.

In the summer, open-necked polo-shirts.

Porko liked it, when he undid all three buttons, exposing the thick pelt sprouting over his breast-bone....

Like a stump-lot....

In the really warm weather he wore short-shorts. Deane had been hiking in Yorkshire. He wore great big hiking boots. Thick green army socks rolled down over really beautiful, muscular calves. The hair thick as far as Johnny could see up his thighs. Only getting thicker.

*****

Our ecstasies are also made.
Our critics futilely upbraid
us, such a figure seems contrived.
They look for beauty, we've arrived
at febrile regions they can't go
to, theorize but never know.

Poetic laborers believe
don't realize, but always grieve
what some degenerate just lives
and from experience freely gives:
a fictive pleasure to repair
those honest toilers never there.

Experience thickens in the head
the half-forgotten Earth, half dead.
The letters on the lintel read
The truth shall make you free, indeed.
The information that you get
is, that you haven't got it yet.

Insane Victoria always mourn
that Albert you could not suborn.
Go in the spirit of obscene
delight, my Cinderella queen,
remove the slipper of your most
hygienic lad, and drink a toast.

*****

Porko and Deane in bed again. Porko massaging Deane's legs.

Noticing how the hair grew all the way up his cheeks. Only to disappear under the cruel elastic of his briefs. Where Porko couldn't resist shoving his hands.

Deane let him!

After it was over he wanted to know why he did that.

Later, after he'd finally got to sleep, Deane woke him up again by suddenly rocketing into the bathroom. The toilet-paper dispenser whirled loudly. He stomping back to bed totally naked. His penis relaxing but obviously still semi-hard. Still full. Jissom wadding the fur on his belly. Yanking his suitcase open and bending over. That nice ass. Throwing his dirty shorts in the corner and rummaging for a clean pair. Wiping his penis, belly and thighs with toilet-paper from the little heap on the floor between his bare feet. Porko saw it all.

Noticing Porko was awake, Deane glared at him. Said he'd talk to him in the morning. Only in the morning he didn't want to talk about it. Thought maybe he'd call on some of his religious friends.

How Anglican, Porko thought. It's my fault he jerked himself off.

Porko wondered if maybe next time he should fuck a High Church Anglican. Like that professor at Trinifty College who read gay sex into everything. Converted a Dadanian pig-farm into an English Landscape Satyr Park. Dressing like Buckingham in yellow tights. Calling everybody Charles. A wacked, rose-petal Anglican.

Porko thought Anglicans were ass-holes. The whores of religion. Every real religion deserved respect in so far as it believed in god and in humanity. But what kind of god would seriously entertain anointing Prince Fuck as His designated representative? His vicar on earth? His spokesman? His pope? Who unfairly likened himself to a Tampex!

Even a hygienic napkin could be useful.

No, Porko thought. Anglicans had too long been too many things to too many things for Anglicanism to constitute a True Religion. Now they could be anything to anybody.

Except honest. Or austere. Or a good FUCK!

*****

By the time Johnny reached old Barganzo, at the corner of Mount Royal and The Main, most of him was wet, but especially his feet. His shoes were torn at the sides. The proprietor's son was at the counter, recognized him, and greeted him by name. Johnny asked him if his father was taking it easy, now that he had a son to take over the business.

He said he wasn't; he was working on something right now, in the back of the store. He was attaching coat-hooks to the head-board of an old Zsa Zsa Gabor bed-frame that he had been unable to sell, metamorphosing it into a coat-rack.

Johnny explained the problem. If it rained and there was no one home and no pump as in the ancien regime, there would be another great flood.

M. Barganzo said that for sure would be a disaster, and laughed.

Johnny objected that it wasn't nearly so funny. There'd probably be property damage. That would bother Barganzo; half of Marta's property was really his.

It bothered him a lot. Floors warping. Walls splitting. The whole dump a write-off.

He'd speak to Marta. They were going to have supper together that evening.

At the counter Johnny reminded Barganzo fils to remind his father, just in case he forgot.

*****

At a few minutes after nine the next morning, the concierge knocked at his door. With him the plumber and his assistant, a young man with reddish-blond hair and a friendly face. Marta's son. He laughed at Johnny when he answered the door, half asleep in his bathrobe. They came with the solution.

*****

Before he left Montreal the first time he had noticed, in the glass case of coins just inside the door of old Barganzo's shop, a silver coin dated 1782, stamped with the faded, wigged and beribboned likeness of Careless III (Dei Gratia). The reverse side indicated the realms which God had graciously given him: Spain, the Indies, etc. Johnny had wanted to get the coin then, but had been distracted by some other wants, and had forgotten all about it till now.

The things he wanted to trade for it were arranged on the counter: some obscure books (a turn-of-the century catalog from the Dominion Radiator Company, a catalog from Bethlehem Steel circa 1910, and something called Smelly's Tables), a set of cheap wooden table-legs intended to support a bronze Indian platter, and a Waltham clock from a 1920's car.

M. Barganzo regarded them balefully, from his stool behind the counter. He would rather have had the platter.

No, he was sorry; maybe next time he would trade.

Barganzo fils passed just as Johnny was returning the things to his bag, and asked a question in Spanish. Why he was being so mean to Johnny, Johnny supposed. But M. Barganzo only repeated, next time.

Next time was tomorrow. Johnny returned with the Waltham clock, and some cash. He offered to buy three of the South American coins for the amount asked, provided that M. Barganzo traded him two more for the clock. All of the coins bore a similar impression of Careless III, or of his identical successor, Careless IV. M. Barganzo accepted his offer.

While Barganzo fils took their big German shepherd dog for his afternoon walk, Barganzo pere explained where the coins had come from, and why they still existed. He had bought them from a priest in Paraguay, who had removed them from the neck of a statue of the Virgin, where they had been hung by hopeful worshipers. That explained the holes, and why the coins had not been melted down before the priest offered them for sale in the 1960's, to M. Barganzo, to pay for renovations.

Johnny wanted to wear one of the coins himself.

Barganzo fils looked on as his father removed from the window a coat hanger laden with silver chains. He asked him to be careful, because they easily tangled and it was his job (Barganzo fils's) to unknot them; a snarl-up could take hours to unravel. His father showed Johnny a short chain for which he was asking four dollars, but he advised him to get a longer one (for eight) which he could pull over his head without undoing the clasp; the clasps were tiny and cheap, easily broken. With a pair of tweezers he extracted a silver loop from a cardboard box of silver pieces, and attached the coin.

Johnny put it on as Barganzo pere had suggested, without undoing the clasp. He asked him how it looked, but Barganzo laughed.

How would he know? He was as crooked as himself.

*****

Porko was tired of Lady Thigh. Throwing her tits all over the place. Spreading her legs. On the cover and in the centrefold of all Porko's favorite magazines. With a soccer player, a horse rider, or a teamster. Always somebody who rode or drove. Men of parts.

Porko preferred Joycean babes. Take them to the Art Show. If the paintings make them fart, take them home. Porko's kind of babe.

Not Lady Thigh. Like a horse herself. Spoiled. A thoroughbred racing horse in diamonds. How did they keep her from swallowing her jewelry with her hay every morning? They'd have to go through her dirty straw with metal detectors. There were poor things in the world. Porko!

Sitting in a Worthless World. Sipping a fifty-cent café au soya. Leafing through the papers. Blinded by the glittery horsey. Wondering how many carats she had consumed by now. Fumbling his change.

Thinking about stallions. Hairy thighs wrapped around lanky flanks. Big Liz telling her to get off her big-eared scion. What does it matter so long as she has a jockey. Have another carat. But watch out for those teeth, men of parts.

Flexing stubby round digits. Fists like mushrooms. Unable to stand it. Imagining cashing his clerk's life-savings for a one-way ticket to London. Shoving the thick bill-fold in the Customs Officer's face.

Business?

Stable-boy. Augean. Castle cleaner. Equestrian hit person.

Phoning Big Liz.

Ow, hel-low.

Offering his services. Another kind of Christmas Message. Share the Commonwealth.

No-ow problem. Loaded. In your Swiss Bank Account to-mow-row.

Buying a fedora on Saville Row. Might as well do it right. Fingering the hair-trigger of the new sten gun. Feeding her face at some expensive paddock. Here she comes now. Land of Ho-ow-pe and Glow-ree. Tum tum tu-tum te-tee....

Hey Thigh, look here!!!

*****

Johnny knew he would have trouble, considering how little he got on welfare, moving to Lummoxville to teach at Pawn's U. He had to ask for an advance. Considering all the work he was doing for free that summer, he deserved one. If for some reason the university refused, then they should at least be able to help with accommodation.

The woman who interviewed him suggested that he ask their new Dean of Humanities if he could use one of the spare bedrooms in his Big House, empty now that his sons had run away from home. It seemed like a good idea. He asked Dr. Normal who he was.

Imagine his horror when she told him it was his old enemy from Montage U:

Rube Goldberg!!!

How did THAT happen?

She explained. It was a lateral move. All on the Q.T. Very hush, hush!

Fucked! Again!

Oh well, he considered. Everything ends badly. So after saluting Dr. Rube Goldberg, Dean of Humanities, Pawn's University, Lummoxville, he began:

We have met.
I will be teaching 18th-century panegyric, and Bullshit Through the Ages.
I will need to make some practical arrangements, with which your colleagues assured me, you could be of great assistance.
I have a small apartment in Montreal, but I will need to live near Pawn's, because I can't afford bus-fare.
I need some sort of accommodation, such as a room, a basement, or a garret, and, if not totally free, it should at least be cheap, because I'm broke.
I will need a cot, a desk, and a coffee-pot, but will look after everything else myself.
I am not noisy, but I work all night, so I should be as far as possible from anyone trying to sleep.
Finally, please send me my contract as soon as possible, to satisfy the Ministere d'Assurance Revenu, who generously supported me when I would otherwise have starved, that I finally found a job.

Sincerely

Dr. Johnny B. (for Boy) Midas.

A masterpiece! Not a word about the past.
He'd expected at least a phone call, for old times' sake. When a few days later, neither His Excellency Dean Rube Goldberg himself, nor his secretary, had bothered to contact him, he was not surprised to get a letter rejecting his request. Besides the genteel High Anglican tone, he appreciated the spelling mistakes.
Inspired, Johnny dashed off a reply, which he faxed using the Dean's own letter, but not without adding a discreet SP in the margin beside accomodation (sic), the very thing he most desired, however one spelled it:

Dearest Rube.

Thanks for the note (unsigned! misspelled!).
If you won't help with accommodation, you can at least advance me some money, so I can rent a place, if I can find one almost free.
Bus-fare would help.
This might be a first for you, but there is no practical alternative unless I hitch-hike to Lummoxville and sleep in a park.
Is there one?

Johnny Boy

When after a few days he had heard nothing from the Dean, he decided to call his office. He got his secretary. Young, Pneumatic. Trixie Zane!?
He asked to speak to the dean.
Who's calling, please?
It's Dr. Midas.
A pause. Sound of hot palm muffling receiver. He could almost smell Dean Rube Goldberg's after-shave. Brute! All over her salty, pneumatic body. Wherever he nestled his fat ugly mug.
He's busy. He's eating lunch.
Would you have him call me when he gets back?
I'll tell him you called.
Bye, lunch.
An hour later, the phone rang. Trixie, again.
This is the secretary of Dean Rube Goldberg of Humanities, she announced. The Dean has asked me to tell you that (1) he doesn't rent rooms and (2) the travel money is allocated at the end of the semester.
Would you please connect me to the Dean himself.
I'm sorry, I can't.
Then tell the dean he should speak to his teachers himself.
I can't tell him that.
That's the message.
She hung up.

He decided he would call the woman who had interviewed him. He complained that Dean Rube Goldberg of Humanities had refused to talk to him. He was also concerned that he had totally ignored his request that his contract be expedited, so that he could give his social worker a copy. In fact, the Dean seemed perfectly indifferent to Johnny and his problems.

A few days later, he received what proved to be his final communique from the illiterate Dean of Humanities at Pawn's.

Dear Dr. Johnny Midas

Following our telephone conversation yesterday, and in consultation with members of the Department of English, I have decided not to give you a job.

This decision is related to your persistent demands for MORE MONEY, which I informed you on several occasions was IMPOSSIBLE.

All of our resources are currently devoted to the purchase of a spanking new Casaubon [sic] organ for our beautifully renovated Pawn's High Church Chapel. As well, we require certain sartorial accessories (chassibles [sic], sweet little Bishop's Blue blazers for the Boy Choir) and sundry extras (incense, censors [sic], etc.) which are absolutely essential to our high-toned rites.

In all Anglican charity, Dr. [pron. doc-taw] Midas, we cannot afford to give you ANYTHING....

We deeply regret any dissapointmment [sic] this decision may cause you and wish you lots of luck seeking altarnative [sic] employment.

Sorry to do this to you, JOHNNY!

Sincerely,

Rube Goldberg
Dean of Humanities
Pawn's University
Lummoxville, Quebec

P.S. Perhaps you will think twice next time you are tempted to correct my spelling.
Actually, it was my secretary's; however, I would have you know that Trixie and I are one.
Together we hypostatize the divine presence, not to be maligned by Jackanapes Marprelate orthographers!!!
Sirrah, we can spell, but we scorn to.

Was she orthographic Jesus, that she must bleed and die for the world's spelling-mistakes?

It's easy to sing it as saying your A B C's!

Shame on you, Lummoxville Iscariot, and your Scarlet Woman!

He should try Value Village. They had tons of gay stuff.

*****

Once, in a Chinese Restaurant on Draine Street, Johnny made an experiment.

They'd been reading the paper. Lady Thigh. Chuck the Fuck. Alapaloozah. Wadda buncha losers....

Johnny confessed. He'd even thought of subscribing to some rag. Just for laughs. Because he liked to read about them. Because he was a loser himself. Reading about them made him feel like a winner.

Me too, said Porko. Just like you.

Now wait a minute, thought Johnny.

Johnny thought of all those times Porko was supposed to meet him for the chicken special at Bug-Eye Birdie's. But was always a little late.

On Draine Street. Just south of Draine and Dungass. Almost next-door to Spam's Record Whirled. Always a little late. With the neon record spinning. Whores and pimps jumping. They all had records too, probably.

The youth of Dadania screwing in front of boarded-up stores. Bankrupt.

Thinking he'd be picked up for a pimp or a whore. Trying to look noncholant. Interested in the trash for sale on The Draine. Staring at old videos. John Wayne. Duke for a dollar ninety-nine. Duke duke duke of earl. My last duke.

Pioneers of Alienation

Hands in pockets. Porko where are you? Walking up to the corner. Going to Bug-Eye Birdie's, Take Two. Nonchalant. Like he wasn't freezing to death. Porko already there. Potato Head. Mr. McGoo. Leg-bag full of Complete Shit. Jerk-off. Must have crossed the street. Watching him from the other side. All along.

No apology. Eager to know if he'd kept him waiting. Of course not. Wouldn't give him the satisfaction.

Said he'd been reading how Rubinstein stood up Horowitz. Made an appointment for lunch. Then split for Paree.

Johnny thought he was nuts. Jerk-off. Let me out of here. Foul Murder Special without the bullshit, please.

What expensive chicken.

Reptilian turtle-head staring over the partition at Johnny and Porko, troughing at the The Three Sods restaurant on The Draine. Dr. Ulysses S. Dogleish. Zombie in a turtle-neck. As I am now, so you must be. Argument for suicide.

O, hel-lo. Dr. Leash. Porko at his smarmiest. Kiss-assiest. Smeck-myum-myummm.

Rimming the old orifice. Taste of arrowroot? Ah-h-h-h! Mr. Christie's!!!

The Leash favored them. In orgies with pimply boys off The Draine in his Charles Street residence for a few arrowroots and....

While he read from his book. The Elysian Idyll. Idylls of the Thing. Himself an idol. Disciples at his feed. Wondering.

Is this old fart for real?

*****

And when he heard I published he said
what? whoring after the gods
of creative writing, eh? he said that
that portly Johnsonian son-of-a-bitch
and I'd rattle the pension in his pocket!

Complacent like the rest.

And more.
I say they're deadly evil and vindictive
not content to loiter in the chair
by the fire warming a palsied limb
like an arrid tree resolved for burning
but bent with the word through the sapless lip
like a spark from the crusted wood to blast
the forest of us not more in bloom.

Not m-m-more in bloom for ages now
it seems to me who crossed the track
and back and saw no growth at all
beyond the blighted fern and sapling
not promising yet or tall. It seems
we hewed our last great tree down years
ago and chopped its height and girth
to wieldy pieces for our comfortable fire.

And when we've no wood left?

Why
we'll burn the critics then, he said.

*****

Johnny saw his Spanish doubloon in Barganzo's case. Johnny had traded some old eye-glasses and other things for it; now, however, it was back, because the silver had rubbed off in Johnny's pocket. It was fake. He was surprised to see it for sale again, so soon; he said so to Ivan.

Ivan stopped repairing an old toaster. Look, Johnny, he said, as he removed another old coin from a plastic tray behind the counter. He had a genuine Canadian silver dollar in his other hand, and a small magnet. He touched the

Canadian dollar with the magnet; nothing happened. Silver is a noble metal, he observed. He approached his father's coin with the magnet; it leapt to it like a cheap trick!

Only an idiot would buy one of my father's coins.

Try this one, Johnny said, removing another old coin from his wallet: supposedly Ethiopian, 1918. It clicked.

That irritates me.

Imagine how it feels to be related, Ivan said, returning to the toaster.

I thought we were friends.

At least you don't have to be friends. I have to be related.

So where is he, anyway?

Right now, he's probably on the U.S. border, returning from Blatzburgh. With your landlady's husband, in fact.

I think he is my landlord.

Well, they're connected.

You rent from Marta too, don't you?

Sure. Strictly business, though.

Johnny supposed that with Ivan it probably was. He resembled his mother.

So what was your father doing in Blatzburgh? Dadanians went there to shop, before their dollar became worthless. Johnny imagined it was full of huge malls, shopping centres and pharmacies. Not Barganzo's kind of place, at least not for shopping.

He'll come back with boxes of Kraft dinner and cheap eggs. He paused for a moment, as he plugged in the toaster, and watched the element glow....

Banking, he said.

Right on cue a car pulled up to the curb outside the store and Barganzo pere emerged from the passenger side, with two plastic bags full of small boxes of pasta (Kraft or an off-brand?) and cartons of eggs.

His landlord, bearded and heavy, emerged slowly from the other side. He was smoking a huge cigar. He looked like Citizen Hearse trying to look like Chuck Handy trying to look like Fidel Castro....

Speak of the DEVIL, Ivan said.

It bugs me, Johnny muttered. Maybe I can trade them back to him.

I'd appreciate it if you'd find someplace else to market them.

Johnny thought.

*****

Johnny heard the phone ring at the other end, before Marta's answering machine switched on. He heard it play her son's recorded message.

Viva Mexico. Hijos de la Chingada.

Marta was obviously not at home. He waited for the buzzer.

Marta, I wanted to talk to you about something important. Something has happened. I passed by earlier, but

Yes? She picked up.

Marta, something has happened.

Yes? What?

You know I had a contract to teach this fall at Pawn's University...

Yes, she sang, on a lower note.

Well, to put it briefly, I asked the dean for an advance, so he fired me.

Oh. No doubt she was wondering how this affected her.

So my plans have fallen through. Now I don't have a job, and soon I won't have any money. I think I should move.

But you have a lease. To break a lease, I need three months' rent.

I know Marta, but there's no money. If I stayed, I wouldn't be able to pay the rent.

Can't you afford even one month?

Marta, I'm broke.

O.K., pass by at one.

*****

It was still too early, so Johnny sat down for a few minutes on a bench beside the tennis courts in Parc Jeanne Mance. Through a chain-link fence he observed two matches in progress. One pair had their shirts off, a fat man and a skinny one. The other pair wore T-shirts and shorts, even white cotton wrist bands.

On an adjacent bench, a bespectacled man read a book. An occasional cyclist passed under the trees along the asphalt path to the right. Through the leaves he distinguished the facade of Marta's house, pale stone with big bay windows and a steep outdoor staircase.

She lived downstairs now, having sold the upper flat where Johnny had conducted his first business with her. She was bankrupt, crooked....

What time was it, anyway?

He glanced at his wrist: one o'clock. As he crossed the grassy boulevard, he recognized Marta's car, the same one she had taken him in to see his apartment, immediately after his arrival. He joined her across the street, and they entered her flat together. She showed him where to sit at a big, blond dining-room table, and she sat opposite.

So, what happened.

He showed her his contract, and the dean's curt dismissal. Marta made a rude noise with her tongue.

So, show me, she said, more musically.

He showed her the first watch, an obscure name on the dial, an off-brand. Marta gently heaved her shoulders, and sighed. He showed her another watch, an Elgin, nothing special. Marta still seemed unappeased. So he dug deeper into his knapsack, and removed a fountain pen, which he said had a gold nib and was worth one hundred dollars, new. Marta picked it up off the table, removed the cap, lazily scrawled a few lines (just to make sure it worked), and sighed again.

A hundred dollars?

New, Johnny emphasized.

I don't know if I'll ever get three hundred dollars for these things, she complained.

Here, take these then, he said.

He dropped a small stack of coins onto the table.

*****

Porko's college pal: Hotsy Scotsy.

Grew up together in Pottowa, Shit City, Krap-it-all of Dadania. Alapaloozah gobbed out his sixth-floor Byzantine-Gothic dormer at the logs bobbing down the Pottawa River, to his own Freddy Match Works.

Lived in the Scottish Ambassador's House. Hotsy made a name for himself, suing the profs at Cartoon U, for defamation of the Scottish Race. Porko tried to dissuade him. Not very hard.

Hotsy was known for his ability to get along with things. To handle delicate situations.

As when his banker decided to call his loan. Hotsy was notoriously in arrears. He left his wife in the car in the parking lot. I'll handle this, honey. Walked up to the bank manager, leaving his own car.

F-U-C-K-H-E-A-D! Smooth operator. She sued for divorce.

Their daughter shipped off to preppy charm school. Mount Allison in Bagville, New Hangover. She'd make connections. A Mountie.

Hotsy in the Drama School at the Mighty U of Titz. With the Pissers from Rhodesia. Hotsy at the chairman's house on Thing Street. Old Man Pisser starting the ceremony. They'd obsviously already washed their feet. Nice white tootsies. Hotsy volunteering to get some really dirty ones. Thing Street bum feet. Really hot dogs. Nothing like 'em. Brown. Yellow. Red. Black.

Pisser scandalized. Ow, relly. Puckering his big fat kisser like he smelled shit. Old Lady Pisser passing around her latest best-selling cookbook. Preparing Primate Feet for Table: The Fine Art of Rhodesian Cooking.

Hotsy's thesis advisor. Feruccio Putrid-Pallid. In a stunning sombrero. Mumbling something about Walter Benjamin that Hotsy'd already heard on a TV talk show. The same one Putrid-Pallid heard it on. Stuffing oysters down his trap. Canapés in his boots.

They didn't call it U of Titz for nothing.

*****

The French man at Vile was nicer about the cat than his colleague in Hogtown. He showed Johnny a list of prices for transporting things from family pets to canoes, all of which had been reduced, and it seemed by the French man himself. He explained that it now cost only ten dollars to transport a cat, a much more reasonable rate than the thirty it had cost before. He presented Johnny with a photocopied sheet of rates and recounted how he had fought to get them lowered. When he was through, Johnny had to shake his hand. They said aurevoir.

*****

The next morning Johnny got up at 7:30. Too early.

Lance Dishlexy rolled over onto his side of the bed, and that was all. On his way to the bathroom, Johnny saw that his friend had slept naked, because of the heat. He was well-hung.

Johnny showered, shaved, and dressed. He brewed coffee in the Russel-Hobbes percolator, for the last time.

Johnny put a strong plastic shopping bag in the middle of his floor, and slowly filled it with the few things he wanted to take with him. Including half a dozen pairs of spectacles from the Salvation Army on Notre Dame.

Finally Johnny sat down at his card-table to write a little note. From a stack of photocopies he had intended to use for his course he withdrew the sheet with Rochester's Song on it, the one about dredging in Fair Aurelia's womb: Love a Woman, you're an Ass, etc. He left it beside the note, on which he had written his (temporary) Hogtown address and telephone number.

Lance Dishlexy woke up, pulled on a pair of shorts, and joined him at the table. He complained about the humidity. He wasn't used to it out West. He offered to accompany Johnny to the train station, but Johnny said he could manage alone; in fact, he preferred to. Lance Dishlexy looked like he wanted to go back to bed and sleep for a few more hours.

You can have the place till Monday, then you have to go, Johnny reminded him.

No problem. And I'll wash the walls for your landlady, like I said.

All right. Johnny braced himself to get the cat into his travelling box. Stretch had seen it, so was on the defensive.

Johnny had to grab the cat and thrust him into the box. The animal immediately began to yowl and scratch at the metal bars of the small door.

Big claws, Lance Dishlexy observed.

It's not a pretty thing to watch, Johnny said, turning the box around so they could not see inside. I'd better just go. He paused uncomfortably before raising the box, took his wallet out of his pocket, and removed a twenty-dollar bill; he folded it and tucked it under the study-lamp on the card-table.

Johnny, said Lance Dishlexy. If you want to give me twenty dollars, it's all right.

It's just for getting around. Maybe it'll help a little, Johnny explained.

My rate's 50.

I really can't afford it this time. Try Social Services. Johnny gave him his Worker's card.

Later, said Lance Dishlexy.

*****

Porko met him in the basement of Unity Station. Under the massive pile of The Hotel.

They're gonna have to change the name, Johnny said.

Yeah, to Sovereignty Association Station. How was your trip?

Vile got rid of the free lunch.

Oh, no.

Now all you get's a Complementary Free Beverage.

A lousy coffee!

It was rather bad.

Do you want to get something to eat right now?

No, no

Foul Murder Chicken's right up the street

No thanks.

All right. Maybe we can get something in my neighborhood later.

The cat. I have to get the cat.

The baggage office is right there. Porko pointed at the glassed-in room.

I remember. They entered and stood by the conveyor.

Just like an airport, Porko observed. We'll have to wait for them to unload the train.

They heard what was probably the baggage cart being wheeled into the back room. There was a loud bang, and the conveyor began to move. A few small pieces of luggage appeared then, finally, the cat's large turquoise box.

Take him, before he gets dizzy.

*****

There were Teamsters in leather jackets, students in tweed jackets, grandmothers with placards and canes, and failures like Johnny looking useless and vulnerable in T-shirts.

Behind them stood stock-brokers and their assistants, from the class of things the students' coats originally belonged to, with pins in their lapels asserting they were PROUD TO WORK TODAY. They kept their backs close to the doors of their marble office-towers. Union and other leaders intoned from a platform on the corner of Thing and Bay Street; Johnny couldn't see them, but he heard.

There were no cars on the Draine. The few pedestrians were obviously involved in the strike. They carried placards, or wore them. Johnny saw one wearing a rubber hogface, carrying a brief-case with the sticker: Corporate SWINE! Behind the university buildings on College, in a lane closed to vehicular traffic, he was surprised by phalanxes of motor-cycles; their leather-coated riders loitered on the curb, smoking and talking to other cops who had

just emerged from a big bus marked Auxiliary. He considered taking another route, but he was a Dadanian citizen, so he continued. The cops ignored him.

The sidestreet being rather dull, he returned to College. Walking north, he saw someone he thought he knew going west: it was Butch! In a tweed jacket with a pair of plastic sunglasses sticking out of the breast pocket, he'd become a Lecturer too!

Butch sauntered, his face turned up to the sun. What a beautiful morning for a strike. Johnny saw by the cover of the book protruding from his hip pocket, that he'd discovered Shelley.

Of course, Butch asked him how he was doing.

He said fine, till he asked Rube Goldberg for money.

Not RUBE GOLDBERG....

Yeah, he fired me.

The author of Blowing a Big Balloon, Powerheads in Bitown!

I'd finally found a position at Pawn's U.

Tenure?

On my knees, so naturally I was surprised when I asked him for an advance to get me to Lummoxville, and he fired me....

Butch looked like he wanted to shake the hand of the man who'd been fired by Rube Goldberg, only it was Johnny's.

He watched Butch's awed expression. He knew he wasn't telling his story very well. Rube Goldberg was a Tory prick, a pompous ass, a

Genius, Butch gushed.

I sued him, Johnny said.

Golly gee!

I have more good news. Johnny let him have it, since he admired Rube Goldberg so much. My Rhetoric of Sodom's been accepted in the United States!

Ew!

He unzipped his green paratrooper's bag and reached inside for the acceptance letter. It wasn't really a surprise, as you can tell from that. It just hadn't been confirmed yet.

A protester passed by, wearing orange triangles with the slogan: National Socialists IN SOLIDARITY. Butch pondered the title of Johnny's book: A Rhetoric of Sodom or Sodomizing the Eighteenth Century: A Backwards Look.

I hope the ass-holes love it as much as a cock up the ass.

Butch was flabbergasted. I – i- it's n-n-not h-how to f-f-fuck a b-b-boy, he hoped.

Johnny laughed so hard he came in the street.

Johnny watched as Butch retreated up the steps of the former Public Reference Library, now the private bookstore of the mighty U of Titz Press. Marek Finkelburgher, Managing Director, wearing his trade-mark crimson bow, waved his wine glass in the third-story dormer. He was dancing to Strauss waltzes on scratchy, old....

Edison Amberols.... In perfect mint condition....

Happy lecturing! Johnny shouted.

*****

His eyes burning from the pollution he walked along Addledegg to Draine. To the corner of Addledegg and Hardass. The Biggest J. Zeus Murphy's Zombie Crypt Store Store in the World. Entered through the electronic door. Why so hi-tech? At the Cripps!

The coolness a relief. The coolness of the crypt. Full of something else. Why they called it the Cripps.

Nothing under the glass counter at the front. Racks of clothing. Piled high with books and nick-knacks. Silver salvers. Teapots. A clockwork zodiac made out of sea shells. The zones changed. While the music played. But it was broken. (For only two dollars!)

Beautiful young men strolling around. In cut-offs and sneakers. Out of place. Out of work. Some with their girlfriends. All in white. Shopping for the whole family. Carts overflowing with second-hand clothing.

Upstairs. Shopping carts full of dishes. Small appliances. Men in white T-shirts standing guard over battered sofas. While their wives or girlfriends bargained with the aproned clerks behind the counter.

Under this glass counter numbered items. Small electronic devices. Old radios. Clocks. For auction. One found the page with the corresponding number in a big black binder. Entered one's name and telephone number and bid. Provided it was at least five dollars more than the last offer. The auctions were on Saturday. One had to come in person to be sure not to be outbid.

Johnny saw nothing he wanted. Most of it looked like things he'd seen last week. Things were beginning to look the same, to Johnny. Maybe he'd seen enough.

Went downstairs again. Took another look at the shoe section. Thinking of that woman complaining. Twenty-five years in the men's shoes! Twenty-five years!!!

Noticed a pair he rather liked. Loafers. Picked up one. Good heel. Fine leather. HAND-SEWN VAMPS. Picked up the other one. Same condition. Sniffed delicately. No odour either.

Showed them to the Zombie at the cash. She studied the soles.

No price. Johnny observed. Hoping she'd give him the generic low price.

Five dollars?

Sold!

Business was bad....

*****

St. Onan's Market. Red-brick Victorian train station. Arched portals. Iron trellises. Locked Mondays.

Best place to buy coffee. In the basement. Right at the back. Bulk food store. No matter what the crop was in Brazil. The weather or the political climate. Always five dollars a pound.

Two young truckers in denims and T-shirts. Muscular. Brushcuts. The first one staring at the sky. The second one following his gaze. Big black clouds like smoke. Billowing. Roiling. The guys laughing. Like that would show the boss.

Green-grocers scrambling. Parasols heaving. Awnings tossing. A guy with a long black pony-tail dangling his legs over the counter of an abandoned stall. A few drops dotting the green-painted plywood.

A darker shade.

Loud crashes. Things running now. Johnny already inside. Covered. Flashes of lightning visible from the entry. Not in the basement where he couldn't see.

Filling a white paper bag with dark roast Columbian coffee beans. Pouring them into the Italian coffee grinder. Setting it on filter. Placing the bag under the spout and cranking the handle. Clamping the bag in place.

In a few seconds it was full. He removed it. Retrieved his knapsack. Negotiated the aisles to the cash.

Upstairs the rain falling in great waves. Tropical. He standing outside. Under the portal. Between the trellis and the door. A man in a suit. Holding a briefcase. Staring at the sky. Depressed. Another man in white shirt-sleeves and florid tie. Glancing at his watch. A young man from one of the stalls behind them. Smoking. As another passed listening to his radio in the deluge. T-shirt clinging to his skin.

*****

Caliban! Escaped from the big House on the corner. Purple tights. Dirty feet. Pendulous breasts. Pink paps. Leaning on his elbow. A hand held out.

Sir? Could you spare a quarter?

The sidewalk burning. How long could anybody last?

Searching for Souvenirs of Thing Street. In the Robarts Library. Nothing there. Thing Street never made it to the Robarts Library. In Robertson's Landmarks of Hogtown. Found something. Gore Vale. Built 1820 by Duncan Cameron. Annexed 1904 by Bishop Strachan's Trinifty Boys' College. Then Trinifty Boystown Hall. Just east of Garrison Creek.

Flowing south from prehistoric Iroquois Lake. Former shoreline Slavenport Road. To water the garrison at Old Fort Dork. Now in a 2.5' diameter Victorian redbrick sewer. Still flowing.

A bronze plaque commemorating it at Trinifty-Hellwoods Park. Like a tombstone. With a map of the old creek-bed superimposed on the present street-grid. Really it was vice-versa. Water engraved in sixteen different languages around the border. Staring at the indicator dead-center: You're HERE!

New York. Detroit. Los Angeles. You're THERE! We're coming!

The Loonie Bin! Johnny'd been one himself. Still was.

*****

666 Thing Street West.

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Pioneers of Alienation

On January 21, 1841, a new jail opened in Hogtown. Seventeen inmates were left behind in the Old York Jail. It became the Temporary Asylum. They became Hogtown's first official loonies. The Hogtown Seventeen. Nothing has changed..... [23]

In 1846 a second temporary asylum was established, ironically enough, in the old Parliament Buildings on Kunt Street. These buildings were used as an asylum until 1850, when the Provincial Lunatic Asylum opened on the site presently occupied by the Queen Street Mental Health Centre.

This decade of the Temporary Asylum was marked by administrative difficulties stemming from differences between the board of directors and the superintendents. See T. J. W. Burgess, A Historical sketch of our Canadian Institutions for the Insane, Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada, Series IV (1898). A parliamentary act of 1839 had vested all property in the Board, given the Board control over the hiring and firing of the staff, and inadequately defined the powers of the Superintendent. Successive Medical Superintendents clashed with the Board and were dismissed: Drs. Rees, Telfer, and Park all went the same way. The result was anarchy and neglect of the patients (23).

That Dr. George Hamilton Park resorted to language after his defeat, indicates the great importance he attached to textual authority. He understood how much what he wanted to do on the empirical level depended on establishing his authority on the symbolic level as a writer; otherwise, he would not have written so much so well.[24]

Certainly another reason for his literary exertions was the (mainly negative) impression of his character that he feared the permanent, written record would leave to posterity. Dr. Park knew that his ethos was repeatedly under attack in the Minutes of the Temporary Asylum, even when he did right. The dilemma the Commissioners placed him in when they sought his permission to release the Assistant Steward, a medical student named Mr. J. Cronyn, to absent himself from the perennially understaffed Asylum to attend Medical Lectures at University College, could stand for his whole term of office: If I acquiesced, it was doing wrong; if I dissented, I incurred ... fresh hostility. See George H. Park, M. D., Narrative of the Recent Difficulties in the Provincial Lunatic Asylum in Canada West (Toronto: Printed at the Office of the Toronto Examiner, 1849), 40).

Finally in this war of words Dr. Park found himself at a continual disadvantage, because of the nature of the textual exchange between himself and the Commissioners and indeed of the texts themselves. As he pointed out, the Commissioners observed no standards or criteria for sifting the evidence for the assertions and insinuations they continually made against him. They even accepted and recorded the evidence of discharged employees, without reservation or qualification.

This unsifted material was transmitted to the government, another textual authority, where it became a permanent part of the written record, of the Journal of the Legislative Assembly for example, or more generally of the archive about which Dr. Park expressed his greatest concern:

> The base and calumnious result of this star-chamber proceeding is transmitted to the government! It is filed as an everlasting record against me in the archives of my native country! It is emblazoned by the Commissioners on their minutes to render my professional infamy as lasting as the Asylum. (42)

In his (paranoid, delusional) imagination the archive was co-existent with the Asylum itself, both linked to the arbitrary power of the Commissioners. Thus he refers to the Rev. Commissioner Roaf's charge, that he spent only fifteen minutes per visit, as the natural fruit of the star-chamber, where the evidence was garbled, perverted, and suppressed, with barely light enough to render `the darkness visible' (43). No wonder its eternal archival existence outraged him so much.

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[23] See T. J. W. Burgess, "A Historical sketch of our Canadian Institutions for the Insane," Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada, Series IV (1898). The prisoners are released from their basement cells and allowed to occupy the relatively luxurious quarters formerly reserved for debtors; they are washed, clothed and for once properly fed. The effect of such physical improvement on their mental condition is radical:

> many who had long been confined as confirmed lunatics were found labouring not under mania but under derangement arising from physical causes and yielding to physical remedies. Several have completely recovered who, but for this treatment, would probably never have exhibited another gleam of reason. (Burgess 21, quoting from the Journal of the Legislative Assembly of Canada, appendix L.L., Kingston, September 22nd, 1841.)

The transition is depicted as a movement from dark to light: from the dark of the cells to the light of the debtor's quarters (described as "purified and airy" (20)); from filth to cleanliness; from the night of madness to the day of reason. Thomas E. Brown, in "Foucault Plus Twenty; On Writing the History of Canadian Psychiatry in the 1980s," Canadian Bulletin of Medical History 2.1 (Summer, 1985): 23-49, calls this point of view the "Whiggish bias" of Canadian asylum history: "the asylum was a noble humanitarian `reform,' the inevitable concomitant of the moral progress and enlightenment of the Canadian community. Nor did Burgess see the nineteenth century Canadian asylum experience as anything other than a triumphant upward progress" (24).

[24] George H. Park, M. D., Narrative of the Recent Difficulties in the Provincial Lunatic Asylum in Canada West (Toronto: Printed at the Office of the Toronto Examiner, 1849). Very little is known about George Hamilton Park. Like Joseph Workman, who later became Medical Superintendent of the permanent Provincial Lunatic Asylum on Queen Street, he had strong ties with Dr. John Rolph, a reformist politician and medical teacher; he was Rolph's brother-in-law. Thomas Edward Brown's, "Living with God's Afflicted": A History of the Provincial Lunatic Asylum at Toronto (Queen's University, Kingston: Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, 1981), 123-27, contains a brief statement of Park's difficulties at the Asylum.

Thing Street Asylum

The Star-Chamber is the locus of the generation of corrupt texts, the archive is the locus of their preservation as part of the record, if not indeed the truth. Finally the asylum itself is identified with Star Chamber and archive as another more or less permanent confining space, but illustrating in its peculiar way the unknown value and unpredictable nature of what it confined.

When Dr. Park decided to reinforce his authority in the asylum with his authority in the archive, he inaugurated a tradition. It would have been some compensation to him, after all, that the written record proved more lasting.

All that remains of his asylum is what is contained, more or less bracketed, in his own book. It testifies to how passionately he fought one kind of hieratic and textual authority with another equally hieratic and textual but ostensibly based on the terrible reality of madness.[25]

This, more than any mere chronological anteriority, makes him a true Asylum Doctor.

*****

The front door of the Asylum resembled the front door of a No Frillies supermarket: a tedious double row of plate-glass and aluminum doors. Ugly, flat, functional. It had never had a nice front door.

Not even in 1850 when it was another structure and the Commissioners decided to save money by not building the neoclassical portico that everyone ogled in the fairytale painting.

*****

Nothing better underscored the character of the Asylum than the absence of a proper front door. Doctors noted in their earliest Annual Reports that the rich would pay 6-10 dollars per week, if better furnished rooms, more comforts, and isolated lodgings were furnished to their friends (1876, 207). They'd also have to do something about the gloomy entrance of such a substantial and fine pile of buildings (205).

The original design was for a landing approached by two substantial flights of stone steps ... protected by a roof supported by costly and elaborate pillars of stone (205). The doctors pleaded that if only the landing were erected, it would cheer up newly admitted patients, whose ideas of a mad house were usually of the most gloomy kind (206). At present patients had to descend several steps into a cellar passage in order to enter the main building. Still waiting for a decent front entrance (239) in 1877, the doctors complained that visitors from all parts of the world were disappointed, and patients frightened by the dismal reception room off a gloomy passage that was their first experience of asylum life (239). A proper entrance was installed only after some 38 years of using a basement door in a side of the main building as bare of anything ornate as the side of an Egyptian pyramid (1888, 4).

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[25] It helped that there were a number of very prominent clergymen among the Commissioners. According to The Dictionary of Canadian Biography (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1966 --), the Rev. Commissioner Henry James Grasset (1808-1882) began his career in Toronto in 1835 as curate at St. James Anglican Cathedral. His Low Church Protestant persuasion might account for his apparent allegiance with the Rev. Dr. Roaf, a Congregational minister and Dr. Park's great enemy. Dr. John Roaf was born in Margate, Kent on January 5, 1801 and died in Toronto on September 2, 1863. A minister of the Congregational Church, on arrival in Toronto in 1837 he took the Nonconformists' side in the controversy over Clergy Reserves. As is not surprising from his involvement in the affairs of the Provincial Lunatic Asylum, he seems to have been something of an entrepreneur. An anonymous eulogist records that "in 1855, he was overtaken by financial embarrassments, and he then resigned his pastorate" and that "the tongue of scandal made itself busy with his business transactions" (In Memoriam: The Late Rev. John Roaf (Toronto, W.C. Chewett & Co., 1863). The Rev. Dr. Roaf precipitated the quarrels at the Temporary Asylum when he relayed a complaint by a keeper, James Hungerford, to its target, the Steward. Such involvement violated the regulations, which stipulated that any incidents arising during a given week were to be addressed to the Commissioner appointed for it (which Roaf was not);

> stepping out of his sphere in the assumption of an extra-visitorial function, (never assumed before,) [the Rev. Commissioner Roaf] brought the letter, the writer of it, and the officer offended by it, into immediate collision ... privately producing discord without remedying it. (9)

Finally the Commissioners simply refused to suspend Keeper Hungerford, although he was guilty of drunkenness, neglect, and insubordination.

One curious effect of such quarrels, often over punctilious matters of jurisdiction, is to make reason appear weak and wasteful in the very context where it should have been most respected and conserved. The casual disclosure of very different realities as "asides" in the course of such arguments, such as Dr. Rolph's mistaking Hungerford for a tradesman because he was smoking in the attic, and Rolph's assuming that it was "to correct the noisome fumes to which he had not been accustomed," suggest a reason running more than slightly amok in its own defense, at the expense of the reality it was supposed to redress. But one invoked it is impossible to dispell, even from a jurisdictional dispute, a turf war. Rolph introduces it to distance himself from it, while disingenously attaching the blame to subordinates like Hungerford who "to save themselves trouble, had doomed lunatics to such noisome quarters." But it cannot be laid at the feet of a mere Keeper. Ultimately it embarasses the authority who only acknowledges it in order to exploit it. Park himself reveals a paradoxical tendency to base what should have been a very real medical authority on an abstract one -- or, in other words, to base his authority on activites that are really properties of authorship. The accompanying danger is that the "mad" reality will, as it periodically does not only here but in the polemics of subsequent Asylum doctors, either discredit authority when it is invoked, or erupt into the text through an unwary aside -- and discredit it even the more.

Pioneers of Alienation

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Johnny had to step over legs to enter. He smelled feet and ass.

*****

To the left of the ugly front doors were two more sets of doors. Between them a cheap metal plaque identified the Plexiglas-covered enlarged photograph of a mutton-chopped, waist-coated man in his forties: Joseph Workman, Medical Superintendent, 1853-1875. It was the Workman Auditorium.

There was his bust in a Plexiglas coffin on a heavy wooden pedestal beside the glass display case dead ahead.

Someone had defaced the plaque which identified Workman as a World Class Psychiatric PIONEER and scribbled ALIENIST in the varnish below.

Someone else had crossed off the suffix, making him plain ALIEN.

*****

Dr Joseph Workman was born near Lisburn, Ireland, in 1805, came to Canada in 1829, taught school in Montreal, and obtained his medical license from McGill College in 1835. In 1836 he moved to Hogtown where he initially ran a hardware store. He resumed medical practice in 1847, taught obstetrics and therapeutics in Dr John Rolph's Hogtown School of Medicine, and in 1853 became Superintendent of the Provincial Lunatic Asylum at Hogtown. Workman's Asylum had been partially constructed by 1850, and would not be completed until nearly 20 years later.

A government institution, the Provincial Lunatic Asylum and its precursor established in 1841, had been characterized by nepotism and mismanagement, and by embarrassing public quarrels between its Commissioners and its politically appointed Superintendents. Workman, a Reformer associated with the influential Dr Rolph in whose school he taught, was one of these.

Under Dr. Workman's efficient management his Asylum became the hub of a province-wide network of penitentiaries and asylums that, by 1859, was maintained by the first ... board of public welfare in North America.

After his retirement in 1875, Workman was president of the Canadian Medical Association (1877) and the first Canadian alienist to be made a member of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association of Great Britain. When he died in Hogtown in 1894 he was one of his country's most famous doctors, and its most famous alienist. He is generally revered, at least by the staff, at the institution which succeeds his Asylum on Queen Street West, and where a theatre bears his name. His bust is in the lobby. He exemplifies the first generation of would-be professionals who created that uneasy alliance with the state that has continued to both bedevil and reward professional life in Canada to this day.[26]

While many nineteenth-century alienists are more famous than he is now, and many are more scientifically and medically important, none better illustrates the way an inexperienced man could virtually write himself into his profession.

None better illustrates the hazards of doing so when that profession is alienism.

*****

In his very first report (1853-54), Workman narrated the cleansing of the Provincial Lunatic Asylum upon his taking charge. Its symbolic nature was apparent; the new doctor took charge of his Asylum and rid it of the plague. He very dramatically emphasized the extent of the pollution: every apartment had been infiltrated by the foul air. It was coextensive with the vast building itself. The source of this mass of filth and impure fluids (4) remained mysterious: some undiscovered cause. It sickened the Visiting Commissioners and others who chanced to inhale it (4).

The building was an institution literally and figuratively characterized by human waste; sinking into the accumulated excrement three to five feet in depth (4) of its inhabitants. The cause of the pollution did not become apparent until well into the report, as if Workman had wanted to build suspense, to emphasize his role by withholding the solution of the crisis, and to delay stating a cause that he knew would dissipate any further theatrics with an element of bathos:

> a defect in the deep drainage, of a most unaccountable character. The interior drains from the kitchens, laundries, and other parts, being followed from their sources to the points of emergence from the building, were

[26] See Thomas E. Brown's item in the Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 12 (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1990), 1122-27. Brown's 5-page essay is the best secondary source of information on Workman and his importance.

> here found to be further impenetrable, having never been carried out to the main sewer, which was at the short distance of 22 feet. The remedy for this evil was palpable, and was promptly applied. (5)

Workman's obsession with such details reflected both his attitude to disease and the rather heroic and all-encompassing role that he constructed for himself as doctor. Fearing the return of Asiatic Cholera in 1871, he described with words and a little drawing how downward ventilation worked by drawing off foul air through a pipe intersecting the drain above the water-trap, on the same principle as a tobacco pipe. His constant tampering with things like ventilation eventually precipitated a public quarrel with Kivas Tully, the Architect of Public Works (1872, 27).

A much earlier source of this preoccupation with epidemics was suggested by a significantly later piece, Reminiscences of Asiatic Cholera in Canada, published in The Canada Lancet (The Canada Lancet 16.2 (1883), 33-39). [27] Plague was another disease of civilization, following the trails and caravan routes of commerce and religion, Workman's march of armies ... advance of caravans ... trails of Mahommedan pilgrimages (38), like masturbation, that other more figurative or partly man-made plague that ultimately preoccupied him.

Plague was a complicated part of what Workman defined his Asylum against, an especially metaphorical sign of what his Provincial Lunatic Asylum was an asylum from, especially in the mid-1850s when, due in part to its physical location in what is then the country, but also to Workman's own rigorous precautions, the city seemed as urban and plague-ridden, as the asylum seemed rural and healthy.

*****

The report for 1857-58 featured an unusually long section on the social causes of insanity. While he lacked sufficient data to confirm the concurrent opinion of writers that insanity was on the rise, he noted the rise of the various contributive agencies, from which he found it almost impossible to withhold the admission that it is yearly becoming more prevalent (12).

While Workman spoke confidently of such causes above, he noted that in 19 out of 20 cases the causes assigned on certificates, by relatives and medical examiners alike, were fallacious. Many of these fallacious causes, which Workman recited from the Asylum Register, now look more like the concerns of any Thing Street social worker than an asylum doctor: Loss of Property ... Excessive Study ... Intemperance ... Want of Employment ... Business Difficulties ... Political Excitement ... Tobacco ... etc. (13).

After this false catalog Workman neatly added a true, which today seems equally ridiculous: Gestation; Puerperal disorder; Over-lactation; Fevers resulting in cerebral lesion; Sun-stroke; Intense cold to the head; Injuries of the skull; Apoplexy; Epilepsy; Parental intemperance; Masturbation; Scrofulous and syphilitic taint; Defective diet, etc. (14). Then, under evils in the existing state of society, he listed modern education and the moral training of youth, and finally some unnamed moral pestilence, which was masturbation.[28] The next year he wrote:

> The Asylums of this continent abound with the wretched victims of this apparently concomitant curse of advancing civilization, a curse which medical alienists regard, not as the result of ignorance, but as one of the products of that which is called improved modern education. (1859, 7)

The contents of Workman's reports were broadcast in provincial journals, thereby helping to create a sense of national crisis. A writer in the Canada Medical Journal 3 (1866-67), 237-39, supported Workman's ambitious plan for a system of secondary asylums and concluded by reiterating Workman's views on the causes of insanity, the most fruitful of which is that moral sin, self-abuse; or, in plainer language, the filthy practice of masturbation; learnt at school by most boys, and carried on in after life by many, to the sapping of the foundation of all that is pure, holy, healthful, and intellectual (239).

A similar item, in the Canada Medical Journal 1 (1864-65), 491-92, urging that a proper asylum be built in Montreal, attributed insanity to unspecified evil habits: Many, we might say the majority of cases of insanity are superinduced by evil habits, indulged in possibly for years. The unfortunate victims, in many instances, become so enslaved by the particular vice, as to lose all moral power of self-restraint (491).

That the campaign against masturbation was at least partly motivated by the desire for a bigger, better Asylum is suggested by the perceived connection between the danger of infection with the evil habit and its prevention by means

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[27] Dr. Joseph Workman, `Reminiscences of asiatic cholera in Canada', The Canada Lancet 16.2 (1883), 33-39.

[28] For the background of masturbation and insanity in the nineteenth century, see E.H. Hare, `Masturbatory insanity: the history of an idea', Journal of Mental Science 108 (1962), 1-25. Hare argues that three main factors account for the prevalence and long duration of the masturbatory hypothesis: conservatism, poverty of scepticism, and fallacious reasoning. Of particular relevance to Workman's handling of the issue is his observation that `From Tissot to Sachs, physicians saw themselves as the guardians of civilization; they proclaimed it the duty of parents and teachers to prevent by all means the habit of masturbation in the young .... One doubted it at one's peril or at the peril of one's race' (16-17).

of more private rooms or even totally distinct lodgment (11) in the massive wings being constructed as Workman wrote.

Workman wrote that he had been attacked by a country newspaper editor for being in error. Now he only wished that he had been. He depicted himself as suffering from an enfeebled physical condition, making his efforts on behalf of those afflicted with this epidemic habit all the more heroic, and all the more in need of assistance.

Workman's important work on educational reform in the 1840s and 50s would have reinforced his position and given his allegations about education and masturbation special authority. The issue and his position also reinforced one another in subtler ways. A form of suppression or repression was the cause of this disease if not the essence. Not speaking out about masturbation would therefore have been just another form of the repression which caused it. The doctor himself would have been stricken, as often happens in epidemics, and guilty or, as Workman put it, no one would be less excusable than myself for the concealment or suppression of the convictions which protracted and thorough investigation has established in relation to the enshrouded moral pestilence which overspreads the land (1866, 8). [29]

A prominent doctor like himself had no choice but to speak out or he became not merely a conniver at disease but its most conspicuous victim and contagious source. His silence would have amounted to the contagion of the only source of deliverance from a plague of epic biblical dimension.

Workman's language strikingly resembles the language of pestilence and deliverance with which he ritualistically inaugurated his superintendency of the Provincial Lunatic Asylum in 1853. Then he was the deliverer of an institution which resembled a world. Now he presents himself as the deliverer of a nation which resembles an institution.

On one hand the nature of his superintendence has changed over the years, becoming more confidently national; on the other, the nation itself has been institutionalized.

What remains constant between the minor plague of the 1850s and this major one of the 1860s is the doctor's heroic role.

Identifying one epidemic with another, and identifying silence with the source of the pestilence if not the pestilence itself, Workman justifies his role as national medical spokesman even as he invents it.

He finds himself at a decisive moment, but so should other members of society, especially doctors, teachers, and religious officials.

He luridly depicts a plague of secret masturbators as they welt, and wither, and perish, even as the tender plant, gnawed and poisoned at the core by a hidden destroyer' (24).

He concludes his scarifying depiction of hundreds and thousands ... continuously crawling on in the hideous march of Death (24), by exhorting all men that this pestilence might be checked (24). [30] Everyone who knew anything about the habit and did not speak out should be regarded as criminal, especially because all he had written on the subject not only was true, but ... it fell very far short of the whole truth (1866, 9).

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[29] See Rainer Baehre, `Joseph Workman (1805-1894) and lunacy reform: humanitarian or moral entrepreneur?' (Montreal: Paper Presented to the Annual meeting of the Canadian Historical Association, Learned Societies Conference, 1980). In 1850 Workman was appointed first chairman of the Toronto Board of School Trustees. Baehre describes the 1840s and 50s as an era of educational reform: "free education, non-denominational schools, and provincial control over the university system were dominant issues" (7-8). Workman supported non-denominational schools.

[30] See H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr., `The disease of masturbation', Bulletin of the History of Medicine 48 (1974), 234-48. He suggests that doctors like Workman associated masturbation with the symptoms of other diseases as part of a general effort `to correlate a vast number of signs and symptoms with a disapproved activity found in many patients afflicted with various maladies' (246). Workman's `On latent phthisis in the insane', American Journal of Insanity 19 (1862), 1-10, contains an earlier version of this colourful passage from Workman's report for 1871: `They cough not, expectorate not, sweat not, have no blood-spittings, no colliquative diarrhoeas, no pleuritic pains, and assuredly none of that mental brilliancy, insane hope, and indomitable restlessness so usually met with in ordinary consumptives' (1871, 24). That what first appeared in an argument for more post-mortem research into the connection of chronic insanity to bodily ailments like tuberculosis, now appears in a piece warning against the hazards of moral pestilence, or that the same passage applied to latent consumptives could be applied to secret masturbators, indicates the contingent nature of Workman's constructions. In `On Latent Phthisis' Workman's confidence in physical pathology could not have been greater: `When we lay open the thorax, and introduce the hand to grasp the lobe of the lungs, we may discover, in an instant, the important secret' (8). At the same time his confidence in the ability of moral therapy to effect a cure seems diminished. He argues that, once the connection between `incurable bodily disease' and insanity were established, not only would the prognosis of insanity be more accurate, but the unreasonable expectations imposed on Asylum doctors would be correspondingly reduced. The Asylum could then get on with the care of the chronic insane, `its real duty ... the happiness and well being of the insane ... to the largest possible measure' (10). See also Workman's `Cases of fracture of the ribs in insane patients, revealed by post-mortem examination', American Journal of Insanity 18 (1862), 349-55. This appears to express a similar fascination with the connection between insanity and the `most formidable disease', a connection previously obscured by the apparent `immunity' of the insane themselves to pain and other symptoms associated with their disorders. `On certain abdominal lesions in the insane', American Journal of Insanity 20 (1863), 44-60, attempts to articulate the same connection, through the intestines: `Deflection of the colon, in the insane, never exists as an isolated pathological fact .... It is however, very doubtful if it is ever present in curable insanity' (57). While his pieces might appear scattered and trifling, their motive is probably otherwise: the desire to extenuate the Asylum, and indeed to reassert its utility in the light of the increasingly obvious failure of moral therapy. Associating insanity with a synthesised plague of consumption and masturbation seems to provide Workman with both a pathological excuse for the increasingly obvious failure of moral therapy and a reason for its continuation in a different form: the alienist as public moralist.

Thing Street Asylum

Ah what a lad your spelling's bad....

He would harness a billion flailing hands....

White Coal....

He was a pioneer....

The GREATEST of them ALL.... [31]

*****

Beside Workman's bust a glass case displayed an enormous black binder with the typed legend: Never Had It So Good: Patient Life at Thing Street Asylum, by... Max the Butcher!

Johnny wondered when they'd meet again.

Beside the display case was a door to what must originally have been the cloak room. A sign said: Mental Board Archives of Dadania and Travelling Museum (C. Lamprini Eel, Director).

*****

May I help yew?

He turned to a woman who must have been standing behind him for a while. She wore a lab technician's white coat. Her arms were full of manila envelopes; she had been getting her mail.

Just a moment till I find my keys, she said with an exaggerated British accent; she extracted a handful of keys from the pocket of her coat, each with a different-colored plastic tag.

I think it's this one. By the way, I'm Sylvia.

Someone screamed, from the depths of the Asylum.

*****

Code WHITE. Code WHITE.

As the announcer ran through the colours of the spectrum Johnny realized staff were running from different parts of the building, converging somewhere....

The announcer had already given the ALL CLEAR, before Sylvia found a key that worked and let them in. Johnny was glad the emergency had not been in the lobby.

The couple still sat on the radiator, nursing their Styrofoam cup of coffee.

*****

The next day Johnny lunched with C. Lamprini Eel himself, in the abandoned cafeteria of Thing Street Asylum.

First Cecil took him on a grand tour of the premises. He exhibited the mortal remains of Franklin Imhotep Rite's masterpiece: the old walls, a few dilapidated sheds, more plexiglass-protected photo enlargements. He might have exhibited Franlklin Imhotep Rite himself, in his glass case like Evita Peron. The resurrectionists were active on Thing Street....

Everything else had been replaced by the four massive towers that loomed over Thing Street like the sentinels of a Death Camp.

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[31] Workman exploits masturbation's scarifying potential: `Case, Register No. 2,826.--T.D., a man, aged 27; insane for several years before admission. One side of his body was half covered with large patches of naevi materni, which owing to the feeble power of the capillaries, had generally an inky hue. It appears that he had been a rather promising youth, but owing to causes which his friends did not understand, his mind broke down, and confirmed insanity ensued, the assigned cause of which was "disappointed hopes". We too well know what was the real cause, for a more obstinate case of insanity associated with secret bad habit, has hardly been met with here. Before his death sloughing of the scrotum and other contiguous parts, induced by cutaneous inflammation, from a cause which it is unnecessary to specify, had taken place. A more piteous human wreck could hardly be imagined. P.M. --Testes completely exposed, and the dorsum penis also bare. The ulcerative process extended to adjacent parts. Intestines, stomach, liver, spleen, and pancreas all normal. Lungs totally destroyed by tubercles. Heart hypertrophied to double the normal size. The full details of post-mortem condition of certain parts are unfit for publication in an annual report' (1866, 34).

Cecil explained that the locals had hated the Old Asylum so much that when they got the opportunity they literally razed it from the face of the earth; they thought the very bricks were evil.[32]

They did exude a peculiar aroma, he thought.

Along the long corridors with corrugated ceilings and neon tubing hung enlargements of 19th-century photographs: attendants lawn-bowling in shirt-sleeves, nurses posing stiffly in starched uniforms. They were admiring a likeness of Imhotep Rite mincing in top-hat and tails beside a primitive surveying device, when a young black woman, funky in purple tights and a short black leather jacket, approached Cecil and extended her empty hand.

Spare some change, honey?

C. Lamprini Eel paused. He had not intended to give her anything, but he remembered Johnny, staring at him and Imhotep. He fished around in the pockets of his knife-edged flannel trousers and retrieved a loony, which he nervously handed her.

Thanks, pops, she said.

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[32] C. K. Clarke begins his first Annual Report at the Toronto Asylum (1906) by noting that the admissions have been "unusually numerous" (1906, 3). He congratulates the inspector on his success in "dealing with the warrant cases" (1906, 3), by which he means his streamlining of the admission process, admitting patients directly into the Asylum rather than letting them languish indefinitely in jail. The earlier the treatment, the likelier cure. The issue for C.K. Clarke is the role of the Asylum as a hospital for curable acute cases as opposed to a custodial facility for chronic incurables.

The hospital role has been compromised for the Toronto Asylum by "a want of certainty regarding its future" (4). While the government is reluctant to spend money on a building that might soon be demolished, Clarke himself sees many disadvantages to the old building on Queen Street West. The formerly rural site had been especially suited to the patients, most of whom had been farmers or, as Clarke puts it, "drawn ... from the agricultural classes" (1906, 4); moreover, with its farm, it had provided the kind of work many of the inmates would have been accustomed to. However, with the expansion of the city and the loss of the farm, all this has changed. If "a quiet locality, where fresh air and restful conditions generally are obtainable" (1906, 5) is really desirable, Queen Street is the antithesis of what is wanted:

> the days and nights are made hideous by electric cars, on the one side, and railway traffic passes directly by the south wall, where a freight shunting yard is also located. (1906, 5)

The Asylum grounds have dwindled to "some 26 acres ... enclosed within gaol-like walls" (1906, 5). With the extra aggravation of "smoke from the many trains and factories in the neighbourhood" (1906, 5), Clarke concludes that "a more undesirable site for a hospital for the insane could not be selected" (1906,5).

Besides the problem of its location are the Asylum's perennial problems of heating, plumbing, and ventilation. Clarke reiterates some old complaints:

> at the present time, many of the wards are so cold that the patients suffer severely during the winter. This is particularly the case in the wards of the main building, the long corridors of which are, at times, too cold to be occupied by delicate patients. (1906, 4)

The hot water is still inadequately supplied by "some twenty-six (26) isolated boilers, scattered here and there" (1906, 4). The plumbing is "deplorable," a study for anyone interested in comparing "the sanitation methods of sixty years ago with those of the present" (1906, 5). Tents for separate accommodation of tubercular patients have to be erected on the grounds in the early summer:

> The wards are fearfully overcrowded; the cases of tuberculosis many, and the conditions all favorable, for the spread of this disease, which is nearly always rampant in hospitals for the Insane. (1906, 9)

Unsuited buildings have been adapted and annexed to accommodate the excess population of "quiet, indigent" chronic patients. Now the former Mercer Reformatory is re-equipped:

> structural changes have been made, which have done away with the prison arrangements that existed, and before the end of a few months the Mercer will be made quite as home like as any part of the main asylum. (1906, 9)

Clarke admits that he could as easily accommodate them in a work house, such as the House of Industry on Elm Street.

Clarke wavers as he considers good reasons for not demolishing or removing the Asylum: the resistance of the government to losing its great investment in the building, the convenience of the urban location to an increasingly urban population, and proximity to the university. These last two considerations are especially important to Clarke, since they would also be advantages for his long-desired psychiatric clinic, "where students may receive practical instruction in clinical methods," at a reasonable distance from school (1906, 5). In conjunction with such a clinic, the Asylum would become a source of experience for young doctors, before they were sent "out into life with an intelligent conception of the nature of mental diseases and the cause" (1906, 5).

It is probably no accident that in such a configuration the Asylum appears to serve the clinic, since what finally makes Clarke decide in favour of demolition is a fiscal consideration, the value of the existing 34 acres of Asylum land (26 within the walls and 8 outside): "This [would] if sold, produce a sum that would go a long way towards the erection of a new hospital on a suitable site" (1906, 5). After all the Asylum stood for to his predecessors, his appraisal is strikingly reductive: "The brick would be worth something" (1906, 5). Considering the cost of remodelling, its "makeshift and incomplete" results, and the revenue lost by not selling the valuable property, he concludes that "a new institution should be developed, on a suitable site, within reasonable distance of Toronto" (1906, 6), or easy commuting distance by "train or trolley" (1906, 6). The "Psychiatric Clinic," for the accommodation of from fifty to seventy-five patients, would be built closer to the university, within "easy reach of the student and physician" (1906, 6).

While a principal motive for such an arrangement appears to be its convenience for "the teaching of medical students" (1906, 6), it would also appeal to the friends of patients, as there would be less prejudice against sending them to the ward of a hospital than to an asylum. The clinic might have what Clarke terms an "intimate relationship" with the Provincial General Hospital, but it would remain under the management of the Hospital for the Insane because "no specialty has a greater reason for existence than that of mental diseases" (1906, 6). Meanwhile the widespread prejudice in favour of general hospitals over hospitals for the insane would be overcome as, with "with proper equipment, our results should be just as striking and satisfactory as in any hospital department" (1906, 10). Exploiting prejudice on one hand while, albeit less energetically, attempting to reform it on the other, Clarke's loyalty already seems unevenly divided between his position as Medical Superintendent of the Toronto Asylum, and his dream.

Thing Street Asylum

How the superstitious locals hated my lovely Asylum, Imhotep's masterpiece, Cecil resumed, plaintively. They treated it like.... like....

Frankenstein's castle? Johnny suggested.

Precisely!

Johnny knew it had always been squalid. You entered through the basement which stank with all the backed-up sewer shit, the exhaust from the 37 kitchens, the slops. It was an anachronism, even before it was built. A Kirkbride Institution. A bastard Babel Tower. A cash mastodon for Philistines.

They entered a large hall which a sign identified as the Community Centre. At round picnic tables along the walls, patients sat and swayed.

A young man in a studded leather jacket and a pair of very elegant women's high-heeled fur-lined winter boots, alternately dragged on his cigarette and pressed his hands to his bandaged head and screamed: Oh, you Calgary girls.

They descended the dark-varnished stairs, into the cellar under the staff cafeteria.

This was the entrance to the gun turrets, Cecil explained.

He escorted him into a corner, where a very ugly stone fireplace was still embedded in the wall.

Sorry to do this to you, JOHNNY!

Kneel!

*****

The Asylum's notoriously complex and inefficient heating and plumbing systems became rhetorical commonplaces.

In 1879 Workman's successor, Dr. Daniel Clark, complained that the heating was still done by a hot water system using 35 furnaces. Dismantling and cleaning them took the mason two months' work every year, they required constant labour to fill and keep burning, and refilling the coal bins in the basement polluted the lower flowers with dust.

In 1889 two boilers were introduced for the production of steam heat, replacing 8 of the antiquated brick furnaces, by then already over forty years old.

*****

Kneel, and examine it.

Well, all right.

Tell me what you see.

Johnny saw a grill with a faint Gothic arch design that looked like it had been mass-produced by the Krupp factory.

I see ... a pattern! The ritual sacrifice of a million patient lambs....

You see! Cecil crowed victoriously. Beauty! Aesthetics! They cared about beauty and aesthetics!

*****

On May 15, 1889, Thomas Merton, a former patient at the Asylum for the Insane, wrote the Inspectors of Prisons and Public Charities, W.J. O'Reilly and Robert Christie, to notify them of important matters in connection with the treatment of patients in the Asylum.[33] While a patient in Ward No. 12 he had witnessed the brutal abuse of his ward-mates by the Supervisor, Kennedy, and Assistants Rutledge and McCreary.

According to Merton, the three attendants took John Manley and Allan Kennedy into a room from which he heard faint cries. By looking through a key-hole and the fan light over the door Merton saw them prepare their victim by twisting a towel in the shape of a rope & putting it around the neck & tightening it, so that they could not scream. The Attendants subsequently punched and kicked the men, sometimes standing on the bed so that when kicking these poor fellows, they would reach high up on the body.

Justifying the latter, he brutalizes the mentally ill of the metropolis, describing "the flocking of mental weaklings to the city" and urging that "something must be done to meet the requirements of the situation" (1908, 3). Evidently a metropolitan magnet for "mental weaklings," the city needs a psychiatric clinic, which he asserts would "relieve the situation materially," but without which "we cannot cope with t he difficulties which face us" (1908, 3). Much of Clarke's subsequent writing is devoted to dramatizing and problematizing the city's needs, and the clinic's ability to supply and even solve them; the Asylum proper dwindles into insignificance beside the psychiatric clinic, a "virtual asylum" with the whole city, if not the nation, potentially its "patient."

[33] See the Archives of Ontario, Inspector of Asylums Correspondence, 1870-1897, RG 63-A1, Volume 250, File #6912.

Merton also reported how on another occasion he observed as an evidently confused patient from the Refractory Ward wandered away from the rest of his walking party and an Attendant went after him & brought him back and struck him on the head, knocked him down & kicked him in the chest & bowels. He noted, ironically, that it was wonderful how careful the Attendants were, not to care for but to watch the movements of the Doctors for the best opportunity to abuse their patients. Merton concluded that from the cunning way in which these attendants act only a detective, posing as a supposed lunatic, could catch them.

It is probably important to note, rather than suppose that he is merely acting out a grudge, that Merton appears to have been far from totally negative about the Asylum and its staff. He described the abusive Kennedy's successor, Mr. Arthur Bollard, as a model man, and expressed his gratitude for the latter's deep interest in himself and other patients. He recalled Bollard's starting a calisthenics class which he enjoyed; he only wished that all the attendants were like Mr. Bollard.

However, he did not feel so positive about the place that he could forebear mentioning that he once considered himself unfortunate to have been a patient there. If he now considered himself fortunate, it was to have been there and to see & know so much as he did now. Perhaps he meant he was lucky to have survived it.

Merton took pains to appear truthful and accurate. He was very precise, considering that the events he describes transpired 10 to 12 years ago. He gave dates and names as correctly as he could, and endeavored to be truthful in the details. He characterized his condition at the time as all right, except for his intense despondency or melancholy. However, he insisted, he was quite sharp in terms of knowing what went on around him. His being book-keeper at Messrs. Kendrie & Co, suggests that his present mental condition was sound and that his character was excellent. As he presented himself there was nothing the matter with him that would have caused anyone to doubt the truthfulness and accuracy of his statements.

*****

In the cafeteria Johnny explained that he was on welfare and wanted to see if he could arrange something to get the social workers off his case. Now he knew where they got that expression: on somebody's case.

C. Lamprini Eel said they would register Johnny as a volunteer archivist. Johnny would work for him three days a week for free. He should consider himself privileged.

C. Lamprini Eel was a social worker too.

*****

Back in the archives Johnny removed a copy of C. Lamprini Eel's Mental Board Newsletter from the enormous pile on top of the heavy table, and read.

These walls, these ancient and noble Asylum walls, attest to the glorious vision and technical prowess of their architect, the illustrious Franklin Imnhotep Rite. Guest appearances by doctors and psychiatrists. A cast of thousands.

Do not imagine for one second that these metre-thick battlements actually confined anyone, least of all patients. Quite au contraire, mes amis.

The patients themselves lovingly piled brick upon brick with their bare devoted hands.

You ask me why?

Because they refused to share their privileges with the general public: they would not let them enjoy their fine French cuisine and haute couture, their wonderful camisoles and groats.

However they swore, and called them loonies, drivelers, and shows, positively no admission without these tickets.

Which can be purchased from any doctor's office, with a Lieutenant-Governor's Warrant, a lovely souvenir, suitable for framing....

It had Lamprini Eel all over it.

*****

Dr. Campbell was a homeopath, and a firebrand at a time of standardization and regulation, when he would have been quick to defend himself against any threat to his professional powers and prestige, let alone a rape case. With the same flair for ventriloquism that he demonstrated in The Mary Boyd Inquest.

Dr. Campbell imagined a local practioner, from Chatham or Bytown, characteristically bitching what use would a Museum in Toronto be to me? How am I to get books from the Library?

*****

Thing Street Asylum

Obsessive compulsions like those of Dr. Clark's illustrious predecessor, now appeared in process of devolution, disintegration, or decay. Some of these processes were physically restrained.

They were irreversible....

Occasionally Dr. Clark did effect some long-awaited improvement, but so late that the process it was intended to fulfill either no longer existed, or appeared to be moving in slow-motion reverse.

Like the acquisition and liquidation of the Asylum farm.

Workman had annually reported its growth and development. In 1885 Daniel Clark reported that it had shrunk from 105 acres five years ago to 79, thanks to incursions from the Central Prison brick yards, the Mercer Reformatory, and the railroads. By 1886 Funnyside Farm was virtually gone, the Asylum having lost another 60 acres. Subsequently Clark had to build new walls on their own boundaries out of the old material (1888, 4). These marked the severely curtailed grounds: a continuation of Shaw Street on the East and of Dovercourt on the west (1888, 4). In 1889 1,600 feet of wall were reconstructed, out of material from the old wall, to mark the new boundaries.

*****

Dr. Praetorius had an insane desire to create mergers. Then a propagandistic orgy at which his merry serfs would commemorate their own fuck-over.

He stabbed his copy of the Mental Board Newsletter where The Pioneer of Social Change had foolishly presented a very biased version of recent mental history at Thing Street Asylum.

How the evil Machiavels of the Mental Institutions Harmonization Board were forcing the ancient Asylum to merge with the Liquor Control Board and the Ministry of Lotteries and Tourism in a perfectly secular mariage de convenance.

Praetorius wanted to know what the hell was the matter with convenience anyway. Now you could get drunk, gamble and be treated for addictions all at once.

The mental wards they had closed thanks to deinstutionalization would become the links in a Dadania-wide chain of youth hostels and psychomes. Now the squeegee kids could travel and see the country better than ever, just as Grand Vizier Alapaloozah suggested in his last Christmas Message.

They could work out some sort of flat-fee. A package deal!

Community Mental Hell....

This was worth celebrating. It called for a party. Like in the old days. An Asylum Ball!

Fritz! Fritz!

Yes, master.

I have a strange notion how we can save our ass-holes in these dark days of mergers, cut-backs, down-sizing and deinstitutionalization!

Speak, master.

We must work together....

Sing it loud with me....

*****

The phone rang in the Archivist's private sanctum and Johnny got up from the examining table to answer. An excited voice on the line.

It was Fritz.

He'd found Franklin Imhotep Rite. He was in the Stellar Café on top of the Coke machine. At first he thought it was Evita Peron or Mother Theresa.

Franklin Imhotep Rite! If you wanted to build a nice, cosy, unpretentious insane asylum, he'd be the man for it....

Fritz urged Johnny to phone Cecil and go with him in his station wagon to retrieve the pioneering architect. The station wagon was a reconditioned hearse...

The café was on a little side street near the Asylum. Don't bother about the cops

Johnny phoned Cecil. The phone rang and rang. The good doctor was with a client. He was psychoanalyzing a poor architecture student who never got tenure.

Fortunately, he hadn't slipped a psychotropic substance into her coffee. The chemical reaction would have been ghastly to watch. He'd have hated to witness: eyes starting suddenly from her head, hot flashes, face flushing, speech slurring, the tongue like a roller-coaster careening out of a control, unable to tell the roof of her mouth from the floor....

Yes, he mused, gazing pensively. It was a very good....

FUCK that phone!!!

C. Lamprini Eel, here. He took the call in his sanctuary.
Dr. Eel, it's Johnny.
I recognized your lovely voice.
I have news.
Ye-es?

C.O.N.S.T.A.N.....

When he returned to his client she was calmly sitting, exactly as he had left her. A suitable brain....

*****

Dr. Campbell strenuously objected to the sexual connotations of terms like excitement for what he regarded as Galvanism's vitalizing influence. Such loaded terms, with all their sexual connotations, were the biased sensationalization, based on misunderstanding, of a valid medical treatment, by hostile and recalcitrant professionals none of whom could distinguish between the action of the positive and negative poles of the apparatus employed (vii).

William Edward Bowman, editor of the Canada Lancet (Montreal), described a similar procedure in Amenorrhoea, Canada Lancet 1.4 (June, 1863), 25-27, under Electricity. This agent was not applicable in high states of congestion, but in ordinary cases it seldom failed of doing good .... placing one conductor on the sacrum and the other over the pubes, shocks of medium intensity should be passed through the womb for ten or fifteen minutes daily during the catamenial period (25). Bowman stated that amenorrhoea often, but not always, indicated pregnancy. Sexual intercourse, independently of pregnancy, not unfrequently arrested menstruation for two or three months, when its unexpected reappearance gave much joy to the single, and disappointment to thr recently married (27).

Workman misquoted Campbell's original statement, that Mary had difficulty at her menstrual periods. The semantic shift from difficulty to suppression, was all-important in its bearing on the case.

*****

They met with Carlotta La Fay to discuss THE BABYLONIAN BIN book....
The architecture student....
Daddy sent her to college, in an Isotta-Fraschini....
Gold utensils glttered in every orifice. Count the spoons....
She specialized in Edwardian Classicism....
Bertie was famous, for architectural drawings....

*****

At the inquet Dr. Workman revealed something he'd been saving for dramatic effect. Dr. Campbell had indicated to Dr. Workman some physiological problems, in particular suppression of the menses (vii). Campbell had found a way of restoring Mary's menstruation through galvanic excitement by means of galvanic apparatus being applied to the mamma or breast, and the other extremity to the os uteri or mouth of the womb (vii). Finally, Dr. Campbell had informed him that Mary had been in love with his son, Posie, who'd had sexual intercourse with her in her bed (viii).

*****

Max the Butcher with Bronson Allcot. The buzzer rang in the Mental Board Archives. Johnny wondered: Now who could that be? It wasn't Cecil's day to occupy one of the two desks and turn the premises into his private office. Johnny wondered: Could it be a researcher? With all its bona fides in order? Not just another Scientologist Nut looking for that box of smut on the eugenics movement. C.K. Sharke's Nervous Ward Files. Cold Killer himself and his sidekick Charlie Fincks from Dadania Hygiene. The defective immigrant, or the feeble-minded woman. The low grade imbecile; the high grade moron. Johnny was tired of the same old shit all the time.

No, fortunately it was only Max the Butcher. Relieved, he opened the door. But look what The Maxer brought! Unshaven jaw like the unmanned rudder of a ghost ship. Lost, ship-wrecked eyes. In floor-length raincoat with a scarf draped around his shoulders like an old lady's shawl. Worn with something of an old lady's air of time's outrage. Max introduced them.

Johnny, this is Bronson, Bronson Allcott.

Johnny offered his hand but Bronson recoiled, wary. He started to remove Sylvia's priceless rare books. He held up an especially rare one by Spurgeon on phrenology. Johnny immediately began to distract him by inviting him to

sign the guest book on the cheap deal table near the door. Bronson refused, warily; at least he had stopped trying to steal the books.

Johnny's a thief, he said, hypocritically eying Johnny's watch. I want a Coke. Max extracted a loony from his coin purse and handed it to him.

You'll have to drink it outside, Max warned him. Sylvia refused to let anyone bring food or drink into the Mental Board Archives.

I don't want to drink it in here, Bronson remarked, ungraciously. He left, heading for the pop machine down the corridor. Johnny supposed he would either get lost or be mugged.

How old do you think he is?

Johnny refused to say what he thought. Meanwhile Bronson had returned from the pop machine, deposited his Coke on a table outside the archives, and joined Max and Johnny.

I mean, how old does he look?

Johnny hated to say. Johnny stared hard at the ravaged face and the enormous, swaying jaw. Suddenly, he saw. The unmistakably twisted grimace of the former Grand Vizier of Dadania!

Forty-five, Max said, with profound admiration.

Imagine the life....

*****

Johnny's first Mental Board meeting. Dr. Giffer Gibbon (Order of Dadania, 2nd Class) & Professor Lamprini, (Ph.D., Emeritus Professor of Social Change, etc.). Busted after a eugenics scam in the 50s, the ill-fated octogenerian duo opened a mental museum. It was that, or be put in one.

They discussed their contribution to Dr. Praetorius's Asylum Ball, the biggest 666 bash ever. Johnny the collaborator. Johnny proposed a display. Max suggested something on lunatic vistas. Somebody asked why bother: no lunatics invited.

Max was STUNNED. Like a baby seal after the first bat. Poor sweet injured pup. Three, and he's a pelt. He'll resign, he thinks. Fat chance, Johnny knows. They'll drag him off that Mental Board. Kicking and screaming. Trailing references and Handy Institute greenbacks, out his tight, sealskin asshole.

Sylvia said it was VILLAGE POLITICS. She'd seen it....

In Timbuktu....

With Sanders of the River....

At the reception Johnny thought he was in a bad remake of Sunset Boulevard.

The widow of world-renowned neurologist Clarence Bagman Farout showed up in a diaphanous presentation gown. From the time when shrinks had faces. They recalled the glory days of C.K. Cold Killah Sharke with Feeble-Minded Women selling Race Suicide on every street-corner, Defective Immigrants organizing Occupational Wanderers in every Eatones Store.

Many of the guests had been personally acquainted with Charlie Fincks, world-famous founder of the Dadanian National Action Committee for MENTAL HYGIENE.

*****

Johnny met C. Lamprini Eel in the market, where he went for coffee. Or had Cecil being following him? Suddenly he recognized the shiny round head, with its scrappy goatee and gold-filled pince-nez. Cecil wanted to talk to him. Johnny wanted to talk to Cecil. A fateful meeting, if accidental. Cecil was very unhappy about Johnny's contribution to Dr. Praetorius's MERGER NIGHT ASYLUM BALL, commemorating their union with the Liquor Control Board and the Ministry of Lotteries and Casinos.

Who are you? He demanded, with sudden violence.

Ugh, ugh ....

I mean to the administration, of course.

I don't know, he said; he supposed Cecil would say,

You're nobody! NOBODY! He was hopping with rage.

Oh, well.

To the administration of course, he qualified himself again, shrewdly sensing that he might have gone too far; he didn't want to overplay his powerful hand. I'm nobody too, anymore. He ended on a tragic note.

Cecil invited him over to his pad. He wanted to practice on him.

*****

Mary's aversion to Dr. Campbell impressed him, when on Saturday she accused him of having brought [her] to this (viii). Dr. Campbell retorted, you committed the act yourself (viii). Referring to the wound in her throat, he subsequently explained; morever, the articulation of words was so imperfect, from the state of her throat, that almost anything could be made out of the indistinct sounds she uttered (viii).

*****

A photograph of a herd of naked satyrs on the wall. Dancing a can-can. An American Psychiatric Association convention that got out of hand.

Cecil had the developer give it an antique tinge and mount it in an old frame, but they were obviously modern doctors: square-faced, paunchy, with carefully barbered neo-Freudian beards. Cecil had intended them to look like they were emerging out of the developer's chemically created Dawn of Antiquity, not just leaving a seminar on neurotoxins that happened to have been held that year in a nudist camp.

Withered flower children not one of whom, Johnny saw to his dissatisfaction, was even well hung. Poor Cecil!

Cecil said Johnny should try to picture the display from the standpoint of Your Typical Psychiatric Nurse. Exhausted. Tired of standing on her feet all day. Worried about her job. Just wanting a little entertainment. Johnny thought about a psychiatric nurse he knew....

She told him that early in her career she'd had a world famous film director for a patient. She had given the great man some cut-outs to do. She thought she had been humoring him. Only much later she realized that he must have been humoring her. Johnny pictured the kind of display Cecil had in mind, through the eyes of his friend: condescending shit.

Cecil suggested a theme for a series of panels: GOING, GOING, GONE. Depicting the destruction of his beautiful bin. The neo-classical water-tower.

The wickedly phallic crane with its stupendous balls. Smashing those mammary domes with gusto!

*****

Dr. Clark's approach was different. Clark wrote and published Mental Diseases: A Synopsis of Twelve Lectures Delivered at the Hospital for the Insane, Toronto, to the Graduating Medical Classes (Toronto: W. Briggs, 1895), in which disorders treated epically by Workman were approached more clinically under the rubric of worry. Worry, combined with heredity, became Clark's master trope, much as masturbation had been Workman's.

When masturbation (because of its artificiality) placed an inordinate strain on the nerve centres, it was the resulting worry that rendered the father's sperm incapable of producing other than degenerate progeny (150). Worry was the mechanism that enabled masturbation to be at once cause and effect of degeneration.

Worry was listed among the four principal causes of paresis (81), and accounted for a number of other disorders, from neurasthenia to dypsomania, in an age Clark characterized as nerve-exhausting (254), with daily brain work above normal; the worry of competitive business; the humdrum of all work and no relaxation; the fierce battle for life all along the line; the envies and jealousies in the world of fuss and fashion, etc.

Consistent with this hereditarianism, Clark believed in the gradual upward tendency of humanity, slowly erected on the equivocal and painfully accumulated achievements of past struggles. At the same time, this gradual improvement was governed by truth to an original. That improvement had always been so was indicated by our similarity to ancient Egyptian mummies; that it must always be so was indicated by analogy to the modern steam turbine:

> The engine may be well constructed, and able to generate much steam, but if the safety-valve is dangerously poised, the governor improperly hung, and the balance wheel out of proportion, the strength of the engine is greatly wasted and impeded. (1879, 303)

The capacity for fulfilling an original potential was regulated, opposed and cancelled by an inert force so nearly its equal that nature's potential could only be realized gradually, over time. Progress was the painfully accumulated sum of many minor differences. Major ones, Clark's analogy conservatively suggested, would be wasted; the engine would never be able to work them off, they would blow the whole thing apart....

Yet, if the original proved faulty or if its progeny veered too much from its idea, it or they had to be scrapped. Moral, intellectual, emotional, affectional qualities and instincts are all potentially hereditary taints or inheritable disorders, the weak link in the chain only as strong as the weakest link (299), or the enemy in the fort only as impregnable as its weakest part and of which the enemy has possession of the bulwarks (1879, 300).

All of these analogies consist of the obviously corrupt part, and a highly corruptible host: the water, the chain, the fort that by virtue of not being entirely corrupt conveys and spreads the corruption through matter and time more effectively and insidiously than it could have done if it had been entirely diseased. The architectural aspect of the analogies suggests that by the time of writing the Asylum, elsewhere described as a pyramid (1888,4), or a giant

barracks, erected as a laudatory monument to some ambitious architect (1882, 48), had itself become a conspicuous example of hereditary taint.[34]

*****

On November 6, 1886, Daniel Clark recorded in his Asylum Diary his having been informed that night by her father that Alice Bedson,[35] a patient who had recovered & had been discharged on August 31st last, was delivered of a son. In statements to Dr. Clark's nurse and to her doctor, Alice identified the father as Owen McIlroy, an attendant. For Clark this was shocking news.

Alice was committed under a Lieutenant-Governor's Warrant in 1883. She was twenty-one years old. On her Schedule 2 form her insanity, which seems to have manifested itself in uncontrollable behavior, including an attempt to drown herself in the bay, is attributed to menstral [sic] difficulties. She was alleged to have been insane for four years, although previously she had been temperate and industrious, etc. She was diagnosed with acute mania and erotomania, which Clark described as nymphomania a derangement of the genital organs. He later stated that no person with it is mentally chaste.

Ironically, Alice remained in the Asylum after she was thought to have been cured, for fear that she should get into bad company, as it was suspected that her inclinations would lead her in that direction.

Owen McIlroy had been employed as a keeper in one of the wards, and subsequently discharged as not very favorably thought of. That was an understatement. On June 6, 1885, Clark examined an epileptic patient named McKay and found him covered with bruises. Convinced they were not made by his falling or throwing himself against furniture, he suspected an attendant.

In a verbal examination on June 11, 1885, McKay revealed that the night watch McIlroy came into his room at night. Kicked and beat him with a stick. The wounds showed this. Were in such parts of the body as could not be inflicted by his falling on his bed or on the floor. The wounds made by the stick were quite characteristic.

When confronted McIlroy confessed and begged Clark not to proceed against him. Clark discharged him, convinced he was guilty of this brutal assault. McIlroy had been discharged on June 11, 1885, for (in Dr. Clark's words) brutally ill-using a patient. Owen McIlroy was bad company.

Because of his connection with his sister, a cook in the Asylum, McIlroy continued to visit the Asylum and, according to a reporter, had many opportunities to speak to the inmates. Alice Bedson was among them. He obtained an invitation to the Attendants' ball from his sister, a cook in the Asylum.

That Alice was a strong, well-built girl accounts for her working in the kitchen and the milking house, where she got on friendly terms with the cook, McIlroy's sister. Alice's relationship with the cook earned her the privilege of witnessing the Ball on January 22, 1886, although patients were not normally allowed to do so.

Alice danced with several guests, including McIlroy. On learning that the cook, McIlroy's sister, was ill, Alice and McIlroy left the Ball to visit her in her basement room. On their return to the ballroom they entered a passage to the upstairs flat, where McIlroy closed the doors behind them and assaulted Alice.

Alice described how he followed her from the cook's room into the stairwell, got behind the door, and did what was not right. While she did not want to let him, she was unable to escape or cry out. He pushed her against the door ... pulled up her clothes and had connection with her.

After the assault she proceeded on her way, returned to the Ball, and danced some more. Later she had supper as usual. When she threatened to tell Lizzie (one of the dairy maids), McIlroy replied I don't care for Lizzie. You won't give me away.

She was afraid to tell and felt that she would not marry [McIlroy] as she did not like him and never did.

However, she admitted she saw McIlroy and even danced with him on subsequent occasions.

There is nothing in her file pertaining to Alice's subsequent trouble, except a copy of the Plan of the Principal Story attached to it. Someone, probably Dr. Clark, has drawn an X over a room in the Corridor for Female Patients and a line from it leading into a stairwell. The X indicates the cook, Dora McIlroy's room on the floor below. The line indicates the route of Alice Bedson and Owen McIlroy, into the stairwell where he was alleged to have assaulted her.[36]

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[34] See Shirley G. Morriss, ed., The Journal of John George Howard (Toronto: Ontario Heritage Foundation; Ministry of Citizenship and Culture, 198-?). In the context of the Asylum's sheer monumentality, it might be useful to note that it really was built to military specifications. Howard, the principal architect, traveled to Montreal on April 18, 1845 to confirm to one Colonel C.B. Holloway that the Asylum could indeed be defended as a fort.

[35] Alice Bedson, Admission Order #5637. June 11, 1883.

[36] Archives of Ontario, Criminal Indictment Case Files, RG 22-392-0-8237, Container 240, 1887, "The Queen vs. Owen McIlroy." Dr. Clark's "Information," and various Police Court statements by Alice Bedson, Detective Reburn, and others, are from this dossier.

Pioneers of Alienation

Max, Bronson, and some comrades from the Patients' Council waylaid guests outside the cafeteria, handing them little slips of paper on which had been printed the following message: If you oppose spending 90 Gs on the MERGER NIGHT ASYLUM BALL to which WE WERE NOT INVITED, then sign our petition. Everyone immediately threw them away.

They littered the entrance: little green half-page sized pieces of paper printed on an office photocopier.

A fight nearly broke out, a square-jawed expensively tailored man shaking his meaty fist in the face of the chairman of the Patient's Council: Dr. Praetorius, who had been placed in charge of the new Minsistry of Asylums and Casinos.

Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre arrived as a representative of her husband's Government, in a sombrero, a wide industrial-strength leather belt, and twenty pounds of Mexican silver.

*****

C. Lamprini Eel put the make on Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre.

He dropped a page torn from a note-pad, compliments of Glassco Smith Kline, onto the singing waiter's gleaming salver.

Join me, we must talk.

Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre normally rejected non-agented submissions, but she was in festive mode.

She waddled over, rattling.

The Mental Hell establishment regarded her with interest, from adjacent tables.

She was like a foundry, passing.

Yeah?

Haven't I seen you somewhere before?

Fuck, no.

P/Big Shitsmell's atelier?

Pig what?

The writer.

O, her. I wrote those books myself. For Finkie!

Finkie???

Marek Finkelburgher, Managing Director, U of Titz P.

Tiffany Finelay's, then?

I have to get back to my desert, you fruit.

*****

The highlight of the evening was supposed to be a series of tableaux vivants from Max the Butcher's delightfully nostalgic memoir, Never Had It So Good: Patient Life at Thing Street Asylum.

Instead it was a wonderfully graphic dramatization of Joseph Workman's The Wonderful Post-Mortem, a translation and adaptation of Professor Tebaldi's Ragione e Pazzia, originally published in The Canada Lancet 22:.2:33-6 (October, 1889).

An enormous figure wrapped in newsprint appeared on the mezzanine and started to harangue the guests.

La Pazzia:
The Wonderful Post-Mortem
(A Masque of Mental Hell)

Translated and Adapted from Prof. Tebaldi's
Ragione e Pazzia
by
Dr. Joseph Workman

Originally Published
in
The Canada Lancet 22.2: 33-6 {October, 1889)

Finding and Adaptation for the Stage

Thing Street Asylum

by
Johnny Boy

Dramatis Personae

1) "La Pazzia" or Divine Madness
2) Mental Hell
3) Dr. Joseph Workman
4) Clever Young Doctor (Dr. Workman in his Youth)
5) Clever Young Students
6) A Mythical Figure or "Shaman"
7) A Sexton
8) Time

Various "Bit Parts": The Human Heart, The Brain, A Voice, etc.

Notes on Production

The centre of the stage is occupied by a large arm-chair, occupied by a character who says nothing but sits and reads for the duration of the play. This character represents "doctors in general," and Dr. Workman himself.

On the left of this seated character is a lectern, at which stands the figure of Divine Madness. She wears a very elegant dress, covered until the end of the play by a dark cloak or gown. She reads throughout the play. Note that while her part is large, it does not have to be memorized, except for the few sentences at the very end, when she leaves the lectern to sit lean on Dr. Workman's chair.

On the right of this seated character is a table which serves as a "dissection" area. The figure of Mental Hell stands near this table. On and around this table, Mental Hell and other actors mime the words of Divine Madness.

The following items will be needed for the mime: a whig, a bathing cap, a styrofoam head or brain, a plastic saw, a heart-shaped box, gowns for the Young Doctor and his students, etc.

The mime could be improvised by a number of volunteers, and might be a good opportunity for some of the staff of the Centre to perform.

The most important actors are Divine Madness, Mental Hell, the Young Doctor, and Dr. Workman himself. Note that, depending on the wishes of the Director, it would be possible to dispense with an actor for Dr. Workman, and substitute an empty chair or a portrait instead.

Note that while as a "post-mortem" this play might at first seem slightly morbid, the whole point of it seems to be that the phenomena of life elude explanation and death by virtue of a mysterious power of infinite variety and change. This power is "La Pazzia" or Divine Madness.

A Plausible Introduction.

Dr. Joseph Workman was born near Lisburn, Ireland, in 1805 and died in Toronto in 1894. He came to Canada in 1829, taught school for a time in Montreal, obtained his medical degree from McGill College in 1835, and moved to Toronto in 1836. After a number of years running the family hardware business, he returned to medical practice in 1847 and taught obstetrics and therapeutics in the Toronto School of Medicine. From 1853-75 he was Medical Superintendent of the Provincial Lunatic Asylum, Toronto. Contemporary biographers remark his "literary turn of mind." Nonetheless, while Workman's career is occasionally discussed in an article of the "pioneers of medicine" school, or in a chapter of an unpublished doctoral dissertation, his writings have been virtually ignored.

This is especially unfortunate given the interesting light they cast on the evolution of Workman's attitude to insanity. The thesis, expressed in some (now-dated) doctoral dissertations and articles, that Workman approached mental illness as an essentially physiological disorder, or that he "dismissed the long list of supposed `moral' agencies to which asylum superintendents in the early part of the nineteenth century had assigned causal primacy" (Tom Brown, Living with God's Afflicted: A History of the Provincial Lunatic Asylum at Toronto, 166; unpublished ph.d. dissertation, Queen's U, 1980), obviously needs revision.

Pioneers of Alienation

All his life Joseph Workman sought the answer to unanswerable questions. Here he translates a work which mocks the arrogance that assumes that one can ever find such answers. Something he thinks his colleagues could learn a lot from.

Note that in his long lifetime Dr. Workman dissected hundreds of cadavers, male and female alike, but the object of this post-mortem is deliberately female, because it stands for things traditionally associated with women: the muses, genius, and the soul. We leave it to you to decide what it stands for exactly.

Dr. Workman must have delighted, in the last years of his life, in satirizing, in this Wonderful Post-Mortem, the futility of looking for truth where it cannot be found, while not looking at it where it already is. We hope you like it too.]

***

The stage is dark. In the middle is a large chair in which an old man, Dr. Joseph Workman himself, sits reading by the light of a single lamp. On the table beside him are a flask of brandy, several glasses, cigars and cigarettes.

Male Voice: I would like to answer a question which is frequently heard by alienists. Do we find the organic changes of our subjects any which may account for the numerous and varied forms of mental disorders? Is there a material structural alteration of the brain, which should explain the strange manifestations of insanity?

As the voice speaks, Dr. Workman adjusts himself accordingly.

An old professor, whose hairs had become silvered in the study of insanity, and who was accustomed to long vigils whilst poring over questions of science, was one night overtaken by drowsiness; he placed his head against the back of his chair, and closed his eyes, to get a little repose.

At this point, a shrouded figure to Dr. Workman's left, Divine Madness, mimes the speaker's words. She carries a scroll, and discreetly deposits it on the corner of Dr. Workman's table. Divine Madness returns to her former place, as the voice speaks.

When he awoke he found on his table a letter; it showed no post-stamp; it was strangely addressed, a little in one direction and a little in another, partly in small characters, and partly in large, with some hieroglyphics interposed; it was just one of those to which alienistic physicians are accustomed, and thus it read:

Divine Madness: [With a florid gesture.] My dear and good Doctor! A sentiment of profound gratitude, to which I am not a stranger, my respect for the untiring kindness which you lavish on your patients, and the desire to explain an occurrence which has caused so much noise, have induced me to address to you this letter.

I know that the sedate and tranquil minds of [Doctors] of this celebrated [Mental Hell Casino], as well as a few of the [Provincial Authorities], have been much disturbed by the fact of the disappearance of the body of a woman from the School of Anatomy; here I am to explain the secret, and by so doing I hope to quiet the minds of all those gentlemen.

You know who I am, and you will well remember that, whilst I was your clinical guest, you made a world of enquiries in order to know me thoroughly. My genealogy was traced back to its most remote source, and it was discovered that I descended from a merry and thoughtless god.

A little mime on Dr. Workman's right. A very modern looking female actor, in T-shirt and tights, as Mental Hell. She is examined by a busy doctor with a clipboard and a genealogical chart. They continue to mime the words of Divine Madness.

My features were studied as earnestly as those of a lover; my body was subjected to a thousand examinations and experiments, poked, punched and peered into in every part; convulsed by electricity when I was quiet; restrained in a camisole with long, closed sleeves, when I became too lively.

By now Mental Hell is in a strait-jacket. Restrained as she is, the Young Doctor begins to give her too many pills. Divine Madness continues.

My inward parts were no less annoyed, for I swallowed as many pills and decoctions as might have terrified a hypochondriac.

Thing Street Asylum

Mental Hell begins to reel around the stage.

At last I was one day believed to be dead --

Mental Hell collapses on stage. The Young Doctor nudges her with the toe of his boot. She does not move. The Young Doctor shrugs and goes away.

And I hoped now to have peace, but I was disappointed.

Divine Madness now becomes very mysterious.

I must, distinguished doctor, make to you, in strict confidence, a confession, without which you could not comprehend the mystery. You must not regard me as the equal of any of the other afflicted ones who have the good fortune to be under your care; I am a privileged being!

A Mythical Figure, dressed possibly as a Native Shaman, approaches the reclining figure of Mental Hell. Mythical Figure performs a ritual ceremony as Divine Madness speaks.

When I was yet in baby swathing, a genius came to my cradle, and bestowed on me some whimsical caresses, and placing her hand on my tender forehead, she pronounced nearly these words, which have proved prophetic; "Live, dear child, as long as humanity shall endure, and every individual who shall look upon you, or shall touch the hem of your vestment, or possess a lock of your hair, shall derive something from you, and transmit it to most distant generations. The spirit shall animate every part of your body, so that, even when detached from all the others, it shall still have sense and consciousness, and by its own proper virtue it shall tend to reunite with them."

Mythical Figure departs.

Here I now am to prove the truth of [these words], by relating to you, in length and breadth, all that happened to me whilst I appeared to be dead!

More doctors and nurses in white coats appear at the back of the hall and parade onto the stage, carrying sheets, saws, hammers, butcher knives, a large box labelled "SPARE PARTS." They are led by the Young Doctor, wearing a blood-splattered gown. They mime as Divine Madness speaks.

You had just pronounced the fatal word, "MORTA," when I felt the white sheet drawn over my face.

One of the Doctors places a white sheet over the face of Mental Hell.

Then ... with but little politeness they denuded me; they lifted me up, and then let me drop into a box, but not without paying a compliment to my body, which, as a handsome female, I accepted with gratification, though I was obliged to appear dead.

They lift Mental Hell and roughly drop her on a table to Dr. Workman's right. Wolf whistles all around.

I passed into the hands of a man who was still more rude than [the others]; this fellow was the grave-digger; with the assistance of another he lifted me out of the box, raised me high up, and let me plump down on a hard cold stone table, that would have made any creature shiver.

The Student Doctors gather around the Young Doctor. Pushing and shoving. Nudging and winking. Some of the students are tippling on the sly. Others are obviously cracking risque jokes.

Now began a strange exhibition. All around, on the seats of an amphitheatre, were stretched a hundred young fellows, some of whom were near to me, and you, dear Professor, were among these; the others were higher up and more distant. Oh! how many eyes were fixed on my members, which I, through all my life had so modestly guarded, excepting on occasions in which I was rather discreet. How many complimentary epigrams did I hear!

The Young Doctor puts on a pair of strange glasses. He begins to examine the brain of Mental Hell.

One long, lean gentleman, with a thin gray beard below the chin, and a pair of spectacles on his nose (he was very like you, [Dr. Workman], and wearing a long, black, glossy cloak, came near where my head was placed on a wooden pillow.

Pioneers of Alienation

The Young Doctor removes a large saw from the "SPARE PARTS" box, and begins to remove the skull of Mental Hell.

An iron hand squeezed my face and pressed it against the hard cushion; I then heard a sharp blade running round my head, from which the hair was removed, and the skin was cut down to the bone.

The Young Doctor removes a whig from the "SPARE PARTS" box and flings it onto the floor.

Next I heard the scalp leaving the skull, with a sort of rustle, very like that given by my silk dress when I used to attire myself for a ball.

Rustling noises. The Young Doctor removes a plastic bathing cap from the "SPARE PARTS" box and throws it onto the floor.

I did not feel the least pain, and I listened with curiosity to what the [Young Doctor] was saying to one of those young students, who had come beside me, and from time to time rested his writing board on my abdomen, with very little respect, if I must tell the truth.

One of the student doctors rests his clipboard on the stomach of Mental Hell.

They now, with a saw, removed the upper half of the cranium. When the Professor uncovered the brain, there was a general movement of curiosity.

The Young Doctor throws the top of a styrofoam head on the floor.

All eyes, armed with magnifying glasses, were turned to this organ, which, being very carefully raised out of its shell, was placed on a weighing scale.

The Young Doctor, assisted by his students, begins to weigh the lower portion of the Styrofoam head with the sort of scale that one finds in a grocery store.

[With obvious pride.] And when the Professor announced the weight of it, there was an exclamation of general astonishment, for it exceeded not only the average of that of the brain of woman, but even that ascribed to the brain of man!

The Young Doctor holds up the styrofoam brain on its grocery-store scale.
The students ogle it. Ohs and ahs.

They now began to slice the brain, but I did not lose a bit of my consciousness or my finest senses. I heard the Professor at every cut uttering his remarks, which were spiced with strange words, such as the topography of the brain abounds in.

Here it would be possible to insert of voice-over using some of Dr. Workman's own "Pathological Notes." For example:

On dividing the dura mater, a large encysted deposit of blood coagulum, with some discoloured serum, was found covering the entire superior surface of the left cerebral hemisphere, and extending downwards over the inferior surface of the middle lobe.... In fact, the brain, now freed from its encumbrance, presented not a vestige of disease, excepting a few spots of meningeal adhesion. [Dr. Joseph Workman, "Notes Illustrative of the Pathology of Insanity," American Journal of Insanity 17.1 (1860-61): 7-8]

His observations invariably ended -- all normal!

The Young Doctor is seen shaking his head, perplexed.

I felt the knife running over my breast and abdomen, and then, after learned cuts and tearings, a hand grasped my heart, raised it out of its mysterious nook, and carried it to the light of day.

The Young Doctor removes a heart-shaped box of chocolates from the "SPARE PARTS" box, and holds it up.

Some of the students now lighted their cigars; the smoke of tobacco has indeed its place in the dramas of the heart; why then should it not honor its dissection? The odor of my internal parts perhaps disturbed the olfactories of these genteel youths: --alas, what a metamorphosis of matter!

The students are seen lighting the Young Doctor's cigar.

My heart, as a dethroned sovereign, was laid on my breast; the point of the knife was pushed into it, and it was split open in two or three directions.

The students open the heart-shaped box of chocolates and share the contents.

I tell you truthfully that these wounds, inflicted on the dearest of my organs, were the only ones that made me feel a sort of thrill; but I found comfort in the thought that the treasure had long ago been removed from its shrine; the sought the prize in any empty casket. Sentiments, affections, passions, emotions, ravings, all its tumultuous array, I had given over the custody of other keepers ....

I was hoping that this entertainment had closed, when I was put to a fresh trial. The Professor, having cut off a little slice of my brain, put it between two glasses, and placed it under a lens which magnified enormously.

The Young Doctor removes a toy microscope from the box of "SPARE PARTS" and examines a piece of chocolate.

"Behold," I heard him proclaim, "a nervous cell!"

An actor dressed up as a "nervous cell" or carrying a large poster of an amoeba, leaps up from behind the table and runs screaming from the stage.

And all those gentlemen, one by one, looked at it, but on finishing I thought I heard them say to themselves, --"we knew all that before."

The students pretend to be unimpressed.

After this the [Doctor] turned round to his scholars, and with much solemnity declared: --that as no special lesion was found, to which death could be ascribed, they must hold that the cause of this patient's death must have been paralysis of the heart.

The Young Doctor is seen to be speaking, his students nodding in agreement. All look very self-satisfied.

I laughed in all the little bits into which they had divided my poor body.

Mental Hell is seen covering her mouth with her hand. A figure dressed up as Time enters the auditorium, beating a gong. The Young Doctor and his students prepare to go. The Young Doctor hangs his blood-stained gown on the coat-rack beside the table. They leave. The sexton remains.

A stroke of the bell emptied the amphitheatre; the sexton remained, and smoking the stump of a cigar, a muttering with a monotonous cadence a vulgar jest, threw my ill-used members into the casket.

The sexton throws the body-parts (the whig, the bathing cap, the styrofoam brain, etc.) into the "SPARE PARTS" box.

He then poured water over the stone table, to make it ready for another dissection; after which he took off his black, blood-stained tunic, and with his wonted refrain and the last puff of smoke, he went out of the school.

Exit the sexton.

A profound silence now reigned in that chamber of death, when every part of my body, seized by the force of affinity, moved towards those which had been its neighbors during life, and in a short time I felt myself re-made.

Mental Hell stirs on the table.

In a short time I felt myself re-made; the edges of the wounds of the heart were united; it commenced to beat, and the blood again flowed through the most distant windings of the vessels. As if awaking from a fearful dream, I

raised my head and looked around, and hearing no sound I arose from that dread repository and proceeded to the door.

Mental Hell rises, walks over to the "SPARE PARTS" box and peers inside. Mental Hell touches the relevant parts of her body as Divine Madness talks.

I was naked, and I must cover myself with something; it would have made a devil of a row, and they would have shut me up again in the asylum if I had gone out in that state; and yet those young fellows had seen and examined me from head to feet; so I took down from its peg your black gown and put it on me; I put a white covering on my head, and then I went forth from that place which I shall never be able to forget.

Mental Hell removes the Young Doctor's gown from the coat-rack, and puts it on. She looks around her, then exits through the auditorium door. Divine Madness is now alone on stage with Dr. Workman, who is still reading the long letter, and sipping his brandy.

Once outside, I became mistress of myself; I went around, as is now my custom, among the things; to-day I walk in professional vestments, which suit me just as well as any other, in which I disguise and conceal --

Divine Madness begins to loosen the dark gown which she has been wearing till now. On the next word she lets it fall to the floor.

MYSELF!

Spotlight on Divine Madness who is now seen to wearing a beautiful, sequined gown. She looks a bit like MAE WEST.

You have now, my dear Doctor Workman, the story of the post-mortem of a living woman!

She walks over to Dr. Workman, who has finally finished reading the letter. Dr. Workman is holding a snifter of brandy. He puts down the snifter, and in his left hand raises a large lighter, preparing to smoke his cigar. By now Divine Madness is leaning over his chair.

You may be grateful to me for the secret, as I am to you for all the kindness lavished on me by you, and for all the experiments made on my body both in life and supposed death.

By now Divine Madness is perched on an arm of Dr. Workman's chair, though he does not appear to notice, still thinking of lighting his cigar. Divine Madness reaches over to the table, and takes a cigarette.

I do not kiss your hand, fearing that I might thus infect you with a little of my own --

Dr. Workman flicks his lighter. A large flame.

Whimsicality!

Dr. Workman proceeds to light his cigar, keeping the flame very still.

But I make you a low courtesy.

Divine Madness stoops just a little, to light her cigarette from Dr. Workman's flame.

And I hope to see you soon again, in some new and interesting resemblance.

Divine Madness takes a long drag on her cigarette. Exhaling she blows out the flame, leaving Dr. Workman in deep shadow. A single small spotlight glitters on her diamonds.

Continue to me that friendship which was so great a favor to me, and which shall never be forgotten by your most devoted --

A brief pause as she raises her arm in a magnificent gesture, before shouting.

MADNESS!

Thing Street Asylum

A brief moment of intense light on the statuesque figure of Divine Madness. Then....

*****

In a party-piece or after-dinner talk, Wrinkles in Ancient Asylum Reports, Clark satirizes the recent past of asylum doctoring as ancient Egyptian history. He facetiously suggests that the Pyramids were intended as hospitals for the insane. These Ancient Egyptians wrapped their dead Pharaohs in annual reports.

The piece was read at the forty-third annual meeting of the Association of Medical Superintendents of American Institutions for the the Insane, held at Newport, R.I., June 18-20, 1880. Clark targets such topical issues as restraint, patronage, the cooking of statistics to produce artificially low cure rates, the sensationalism of the press, and even the surgical mutilation of women as practiced by colleagues like R.M. Bucke at the London Asylum:

> It was also to be expected in that age of divisional medicine that the useful uterus and its appendages should be chargeable with being a prolific cause of insanity .... Were these detached laboratories even slightly diseased then was the excision declared to be a triumph of medical foresight and skill: were they healthy then was it a good riddance to cut out these supernumaries. In that barbarous age it was not thought barbarous to unsex the many for the problematic benefit of the few. (9)

They had strong stomachs.

*****

Giffer Gibbon puked during the performance and C. Lamprini Eel had to take him home just when he wanted to rub shoulders with Praetorius's gabardine suit. He himself wore combat fatigues, as usual.

Trixie offered the press yet another statement....

The whole thing was just a big mistake....

After it was all over and Johnny had worked so hard, hauling all those easels back to the paint store, there was a tin of spray-glue from Sylvia waiting for him on the desk, to exchange at the hardware store. He left the change on the table.

It was the last thing he did for her.

*****

Dear Reader....

This was the version of the play (my finding and adaptation) that I showed to Lisa Brown of the Workman Theatre (later Workman Arts) in 1998. I'd discovered Workman's article in the course of researching the present book, in the stacks in the basement of the Gerstein Library of the University of Toronto. I was subsisting on welfare while volunteering in the Archives of the Queen Street Mental Health Centre and Dime Museum.

My idea and research were the basis of the subsequent production, but were never publicly acknowledged by Nurse Brown or her troop. Doing so could have been awkward for Lisa, since she might have had to pay me – and she intended to allow the production to be co-opted by the local arts crowd in particular a rich socialite big donor named Anne Steacy.

This episode obviously continues to rankle, partly because it happened in the context of an institution with such a bad history of such things – and a bad case of amnesia. Not acknowledging someone else's work is plagiarism, one among many affronts practised by the Toronto Asylum and its successors on marginal hence vulnerable people – and continued into the present. Ironically Steacy has donated a lot of family money to a science writing program for college kids. Let's hope she encourages them to acknowledge their sources better than she did hers!

I have included a copy of C. Lamprini Eel's letter affirming the Workman Theatre's indebtedness to me for my play.

I really appreciated the (remaindered) book.

*****

Lisa Brown, a psychiatric nurse turned theatre manager at Workman Arts, never acknowledged that I invented this play, after I showed her my original draft. While this "omission" occurred ten years ago, it happens all over again, whenever my work is discussed without acknowledgment or credit.

Pioneers of Alienation

It pisses me off, very much.

Not acknowledging a writer is a form of theft. It would anger any writer, artist, or maker of any thing.

What happened to me, can happen to anyone. Queen Street Mental Health Centre, Ontario Hospital, The Toronto Asylum, CAMH or $CAMH, call that noble enterprise anything you like, it has a long tradition of denying individual agency, anonymizing people, and stealing more than clients' pin money -- even sometimes, and most infuriatingly, in their name.

Witness the present Transforming Lives campaign, in which the poor and working poor are robbed of a hospital and its grounds, in the name of "transforming" them.

To return to the immediate scam, I wanted Theatre Topics to publish a letter to at least partially repair this "omission" (or theft), and raising some other issues, but this was summarily rejected by the editor, Sandra Shannon.

She acted like Elsa Maxwell as a hanging judge, although I wasn't asking for her "judgment," if she had any, just the publication of a "Letter to the Editor," albeit with a divergent opinion. She objected to my sense of "ENTITLEMENT," although I see nothing wrong with wanting credit for my ideas, and for my work.

I find it ironic that a privileged member of the professoriate, with all the considerable perquisites thereof, would object. Why? Does being a needy (mad) white male amplify a modest expectation into an outrageous demand? Is slavery appropriate for me?

Other issues, such as the "public relations" function of state-funded, pseudo-artistic fronts like Workman Arts, and the subordinated status of theatre vs. history in an institutional setting, ought also to have been raised by Kirsty in Theatre Topics. For most officials and mental health-care professionals any "statement" by the Workman Theatre Project is taken as the proverbial "grain of salt" and relegated to the status of a Dime Museum. Hence the claim to affect the stigmata of mental illness is vainglorious. Mental health big-wigs are perenially boasting of "removing the stigma of mental illness," while merely concealing the reality under a leering happy clown's face, glorifying themselves - and stigmatizing worse than ever. Without taking into account such considerations, the editors of Theatre Topics are merely tools of uncritical triumphalism.

Finally, I think Kirsty Johnson's "research" would have been better if she had spoken to more people involved in the production, besides the "director" Steacy (who refused to talk about my contribution - I don't wonder why) and the mananger, or the circle of her friends, who appear in this case to overlap, not unlike the diegetic space she discusses in her piece. How about some of the patients, who attended the second performance? They told me that they found the monologue boring, and therefore hard to follow. They would have appreciated some more characters. The characters in my original version were deleted, mainly for fiscal reasons. It was cheaper!

As it is, Kirsty's "research" seems to have happened in an "untheatrical" hermetic vacuum, without the oxygen of reality. She, and the editors at Theatre Topics, especially Sandra "Maxwell" Shannon, should take some air sometime. It's very bracing.

I hope this helps....

*****

Just a few more facts, and then I'll stop. I promise (dear reader....)....

After researching this text of La Pazzia and adapting it as a play, I worked with the archivist on a display of historical images on the mezzanine overlooking the cafeteria.

In discussing diegetic space, Kirsty should have mentioned that in descending the staircase La Pazzia was also facilitating a connection, a bridge with the past (as it were).

The play production went ahead unimpeded by hospital administration, but this display was very much interfered with. I do not believe that this was merely because the Theatre group enjoyed some autonomy, but rather because it wasn't taken seriously because it was a theatre group. This was certainly the attitude among the professionals I dealt with. This was just the sort of thing the group did, and it didn't bother them very much, because it wasn't reality. The historical display was "another matter." While the theatre group could display anti-masturbation devices and probably perform the very act, we were criticized for even mentioning it in a caption.

We finally threatened to hang veils over the offensive pictures. Of course, this would have been more obvious, and objectionable, than the pictures themselves.

The idea that Workman's original article is terribly concerned with patient dignity is probably spurious. It's very difficult to know what any author's intentions really are, but dignity seems very far from the tenor of this piece. It think it's more arguably about the difficulty of identifying the cause of insanity in a brain-scan. Anyway, La Pazzia is a personification of madness, not a patient or even an individual. That Workman really cared very much about "patient dignity" is debatable. He was a sensationalist and a scare-monger who unscrupulously wrote about patients masturbating as a "plague" when, by his own admission, he knew better (you can read about this in Troping the Asylum at the internet archive). If he'd really cared about his patients' dignity, he'd probably have shown some reticence.

Likewise the Workman Theatre's production of La Pazzia. I thought the production very quickly became a vehicle (if not a trampoline) for the ideology of Lisa and the local "artistes," like the “director” Anne Steacy, whom she let co-opt it. Steacey basically sat in the archives and selected slides that were projected during the performance. These

tended to be hostile to the then-current Tory administration. They had everything to do with Steacy's politcs, but not much to do with the stigmata of mental illness (let alone removing them).

A few hours before the first performance I was sitting on the mezzanine. I overheard one of the administrators talking about me. She said she wanted to get rid of me, but couldn't because I was "with the gays." I am gay, and I was friends with several staff members who were indeed gay. Imagine what it must have been like for gay patients! That's also how it was (and probably still is)!

I have to object to claims that were made by Editor Shannon in her introduction, for "shock value." This is simply the fond conceit of an academic who knows more about theatre "theory" than mental illness (at least I hope so). I have a doctorate in 18th-century studies (satire, mainly) from the Universite de Montreal, but I've been for several years a support worker in group homes and shelters in Toronto. There's absolutely nothing in La Pazzia that would shock me, or any other mental health-care worker.

Finally, some of the satire in Pioneers of Alienism (or "Alienation"?) is informed by this event, page 244 and following (see below, for an excerpt). Anyone is free to download and read this, also in the Archive, at http://www.archive.org/details/PioneersOfAlienismAnd50sSci-fiAtThingStreetAsylum, for a very different take on the production. My approach is different too, to juxtapose fiction and history, past and present. Troping the Asylum and The Support Worker can also be downloaded from the Internet Archive. Please note, Lisa Brown, Ann Steacy, Sandra Shannon, et al., no use without permission AND ATTRIBUTION!

*****

Max Von Mayerling said it was a nice, bitchy prologue. Obviously all the madness wasn't in the play, or for that matter the production.

This sort of thing was mainly a diversion, however. Or a SCAM....

A bunch of privileged "artistes" get involved, get a lot of state funding for very little real work, and think they're radicals making a "statment" about mental illness. Usually led by some big-haired broad, a reject from a "Fame" show.

It should occur to them that they wouldn't get the money, unless they were tools, distracting public attention from a reality that, while less charmingly gothic than what they depict, is much more terrible and immediate.

It's happening right now in group homes, welfare hotels, and shelters just a few doors down Queen Street.

Emile Durkheim House!

Every psychiatric hospital has an organization like "The Workman Theatre," though possibly not quite so rich. Such outfits are there to prove that the institutions are open and enlightened, when of course they aren't. Their very existence belies them....

*****

Cupie Doll said it was a great intro.

Possibly better than the play, though maybe it could be included somehow. A play about a play at an insane asylum, mocking over-privileged academic swindlers. Their latest swindle being the conceit that their swill has anything to do with the people they fashionably exploit. The really crazy, the really poor. Not the scammers like themselves. Just returned from a sabbatical, a vacation, a junket.

Those dirty swindling swine!

*****

R. Biter Dicktater cried SHAME!

He was not surprised, given the long tradition of dehumanization and anonymization (for want of better words) mental hospitals are famous for.

However, he was surprised that Johns Hopkins would let even an obscure journal like Theatre Topics condone by its silence the theft of someone's intellectual property.

*****

On the night of Thursday, April 30, Dr. Workman found Mary restless and much excited in mind (vi), so prescribed opium. His brother, Benjamin, sat with her most of the night, as her condition has worsened and she had trouble breathing. He believed that air had entered the cellular tissue beneath the skin (vii), and sent a note to Dr. Campbell, who arrived between 11 and 12 o'clock, to cut the sutures. Typically, Dr. Workman discovered with his stethoscope

that no air was entering the right lung, and attributed it to leakage of blood from the wound, while Dr. Campbell attributed it to inflammatory engorgement, caused or at least aggravated by the cold, dry air that she was breathing in Thing Street Asylum. She was duly moved to a warmer room, but her condition steadily deteriorated. She died on the morning of Tuesday, May 5.

*****

The Evening News of November 16, 1886 published the story of Alice Bedson's liaison. A large one-word headline on page one shouted

Infamous!

It was followed by a series of small-type, but equally melodramatic phrases:

A Terrible Crime
Brought
to
Light
A Scoundrel Takes Advantage
of a
Girl's Madness
and
Criminally Assaults Her
in the
Asylum,
She Bears a Child
and
Makes a Confession,
and
Arrest of the Alleged
Author
of her
Ruin.

*****

The autopsy revealed abnormalities with the organs of generation:

> highly congested, particularly the left ovary, and the posterior surface of the fundus of the uterus. The uterus was about 3 inches long from its fundus to the edge of the os. Its cavity was normal in dimension and its structure normal. (viii)

More significantly, it indicated that the hymen had been almost obliterated (viii). Several nurses testified that during their close attendance on Mary, she'd exhibited no signs of religious excitement but indicated that the source of her illness was Dr. Campbell's son, Posie, to whom she believed she was in the family way (ix). Mary told the nurses how Dr. Campbell and his son took her into a room and gave her medicine that burnt the inside out of her (ix).

*****

In his Annual Report for 1906, Dr. C. K. Clarke quoted long passages from his own journal (The American Journal of Insanity, of which he had been an editor since 1904), of still more after-dinner speeches delivered at Thing Street Asylum, by a roster of hand-picked speakers, to members of the Psychological Section of the British Medical Association, and the visiting members of the American Medico-Psychological Association on the 60th anniversary of the laying of the corner stone.

While their tenor, that Ontario had done nobly in caring for its lunatics (1906, 10), might not have been strictly in accordance with the truth, the particular innovations advocated included the acquisition of some of the recently developed hardware for scientific work, the augmentation of the medical staff, and the freedom of more of that staff from clerical work. But these were minor compared to the ultimate goal, the implementation of what Clarke called the study of individuals and their treatment or, The Individual Method (1906, 10). This was essential for the

transformation of the Asylum, from a well managed Poor House with hopeless wrecks stranded in asylum wards, to a Hospital for the Insane (1906, 10).

In the same year Clarke established The Bulletin of the Toronto Hospital for the Insane (later The Bulletin of the Ontario Hospitals for the Insane), the purpose of which was to improve the status of psychiatry relative to that of general medicine. Clarke hoped that his little periodical would facilitate fuller co-operation between the outside medical man and his patients, on the one hand, and the psychiatrist on the other (4). The journal would feature clinical pictures of typical cases (5), which would encourage general practitioners to approach their PATIENTS as CASES, creating ever more psychiatric knowledge. Clarke describes a TRANSFORMATION in the status of the patient: [from] a menace to public safety or to his own welfare [to] a sick man ... at daggers drawn with his environment, who can no longer accommodate himself to the requirements of organized society; the victim of a diseased personality -- often accompanied by manifestations of various physical disorders (4).

Clarke's individual approach served the psychiatrist too. It created The Clinic....

*****

He loved that word. Asylum. Thing Street had been officially called that for only the first 50 years of its existence and subsequently, because of the word's negative connotations, had been euphemistically designated a hospital. But the old word indelibly marked the place, even after the building had been destroyed. It could not be effaced, with almost as strong positive as negative connotations. The latter were certainly very strong. It was good to offer asylum, terrible to impose it. Etc., etc.

Virtual was equally loaded. It suggested illusoriness, as well as ideality. The ideality of Virtual Asylum was implicit in the notion of community Mental Hell, a complicated abstract infrastructure of services and resources that was supposed to do everything and more that the old asylum of bricks and mortar did. Its illusoriness was apparent in the grim realities of Thing Street. It had everything to do with that loaded word and totally nebulous idea, deinstitutionalization. Etc., etc.

*****

Professor Eel rolled the proposal tightly in his bejeweled fingers and cracked it on his knee. Now, the first word.

Asylum.

Why, asylum?

The Mental Hell Centre was that for only the first fifty years. Wasn't that rather negative? He disliked the connotations.

Those quotations.

The one from Daniel Clark at the end. Changes are not always improvements. That's negative. It suggested the original asylum was a good thing.

The one by Marion. Had I a sparrows wings, I would fly, fly away from Thing Street Asylum. It suggested the asylum was a bad place. He was confused.

Max suggested that these things were mere titles and captions. They could be changed. He had changed the title of his thesis a dozen times.

But they're important, insisted Professor Eel. Like the opening chords of Beethoven's fifth symphony. Tralala-LAH!

He stretched his flashing fingers way out in front of his face. Playing his air piano. Like Svengali.

After all, he was a shrink.

The half life-size statue of Wagner studied them from its alcove beside the baby grand piano. Arms folded. Jaw set. Behind him the sky blushed pink unobstructed by buildings. Thirty floors above Boy Street they could not hear the traffic....

Asylum!

On the way out, Johnny noticed on the piano, a framed autographed picture of....

Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre!

Her concert pianist!

In the elevator they had to swallow hard to repressurize. Or maybe it was only their imagination. What difference would it have made, if their brains had imploded....

******

Pioneers of Alienation

While the authorities used terms like asylum, hospital, clinic, reception hospital, Poor Man's Sanatorium, etc., the patients saw the Asylum less positively, and more inventively, as a living tomb, an especially long drawn-out kind of murder, a fourth-rate hotel run by sadistic scullery maids, a brothel for Government Bonded White Slaves, Ontario Hospital Hell, etc....

*****

Fritz called Max the Butcher to ask him how the hagiography was going. At least that is what he said.

Max realized. They wanted to get rid of him!

Fritz said he'd been doing the income tax for the Mental Board and had to sign something that said none of the Directors materially benefited from the organization or were remunerated in any way.

O?

Well, what about all that dough for the Fathers of Lunacy?

O-oh.

Must I perjure myself again!

Why not?

Professor Eel strongly disapproves.

He didn't before.

Before, you weren't keeping company with Johnny.

O.

Get rid of him, or NO MORE MONEY!

O, horrible expression! Fritz didn't even know about that dough he was getting from Charles Waldorf Handy's Institute for De-Instituionalization Studies, sponsored by the Handy Havens of Dadania and their famous family of burgers....

What's the matter with the receiver!

He was counting....

*****

Pounding on the door. Who would dare? Last night it was some Thing Street drunk.

Coming....

He flattened the gilt-framed pictures of naked athletes from the 1930 Olympics. In case it was a social worker.

Johnny and the internet fraudster from Trinidad answered the door together. The guy from Trinidad asking if Johnny was expecting anybody. Meaning any body.

It was Franklin Imhotep Rite....

With a message scribbled on papyrus in hieroglyphics.... To Johnny from C. Lamprini Eel, Ph.D.... Co-signed by Max the Butcher from the School of Criminology and Social Work and Charles W. Handy, First Vice-President of the Society of Shrink Screws....

Fuck off and die.

*****

The Maxer thinking about all that money flowing to him from the munificent Handy Institute. That Cecil got him. Just for being (a) patient. Har har har!

Now Johnny was compromising all that doctor dough. Becoming a liability. How could he schmooze with his pals at Vix College in the mighty U of Titz? With Johnnyboy stinking beside him? Introducing him to vixens like Fay McPerson, Sweet Songstress?

Johnny with his crumminess, his angry broadsides protesting slave-labour lecturers, his paranoia!

Not that Max the Butcher had anything against paranoia. Of course not!

Not that some of his best buddies didn't suffer from time to time from paranoid delusions of grandeur.....

Why, he himself, occasionally....

Oh, he should never have trusted that FUCKING TRAITOR!!!

*****

Bronson Allcott was in the lobby. Panhandling under hairy Workman's plaster butt. Workman frowned. Bronson begged. Johnny lied.

Sorry, he didn't have any money for a Coke. A rat-fanged shadow passed over the window display behind them.

That goatee did weird things in silhouette....

Professor Eel!

Skulking around his archives. Rummaging through personnel files, research agreements, c.v.'s, references, names....

Architectural drawings....

*****

Porko at his most worshipful. Asking politely what The Leash was having for dinner. What masticating.

The club sandwich. He ate so many at the Faculy Association.

Great Dadanian Humanist that he was. Those joyous occasions were adding up....

Many a junket on the Social Sciences and Research Council of Dadania circuit. Feeding his face. Fund-raising for the Group of Seven-Eleven. Could have been the Kingston Trio. For all they knew.

Someboy stole Evening at Tobymory from the Faculty Club lounge. While they were sleeping off the aftermath of yet another joyous occasion.

Wondered why anybody wanted it. Collected the insurance. A bundle. What to do with the money? Formed committees. Totally ad hog. Traveling all over the country discussing how to spend the money. Over dinner. Feeding their faces. Eating their Group of Seven-Eleven.

Then somebody found it.

Here's your painting back, boys. (Welcome to it!) Where's the insurance money?

O-oh. Handy's Haven from now on.

How's your book selling? Porko making polite chit-chat.

Had a launching at the Club last week.

A lunching, Johnny supposed.

Good turnout. Bigger than Norrie's funeral. Not so many Pratt-falls. Ha ha ha.

Porko didn't get it. Introduced him to Johnny. Not Dr. Johnny Midas. Too many doctors. Doctor thyself, physician. Life's a bitch.

Porko extremely nervous till they left. Never frequent Handy's Haven again.

How The Leash had aged! Senator at Cartoon U. Remembered how he'd tried to get credit for some courses at Queen's. The Leash wouldn't let him. Nodded towards him. Fine figure of a man. From all that swimming. Scots secular humanist saint. Celibate too.

Big dork, Porko said.

We all know about Queens.

Porko bought The Elysian Idyll at Worthless World for fifty cents.

Let's go to his Rest Home and ask him for his autograph, Porko suggested.

What a good i-dyll.

Not since Allen Ginsberg visited Jack Kerouac had there been such a turfside display of emotion. Tearing off one's hair and pulling off one's clothes. Flash-bulbs popping. Good grief. Champion typist. Fingers stilled at last.

Everyone an Adam-Figure.

Rest piecefully, Norrie Freed....

*****

Professor Eel phoned Max the Butcher to spy on Johnny Boy's oral history of Psychiatric Survival. He slyly invited Maxie to contribute something from Never Had It So Good to The Babylonian Bin.

Something about patients in golf-carts. Tooling around the manicured lawn....

Anything to make Johnny jealous!

*****

The Maxer and Johnny sitting on the curb outside the Pastatalia Cafe. The Maxer looking anxious. Nattering softly to himself.

Keep on going ... Get a reference from C. Lamprini Eel ... Get the Handy Institute's dough ... 50 Gs! Sometimes I wonder ... how do I do it? 50 Gs!!!

Johnny had a very good idea.

Show me Cecil's proposal, Johnny said.

Pioneers of Alienation

H-h-here it is, Maxie extracted it from his portfolio.
Yum, said Johnny, scanning the fatuous document. I have my work cut out for me.
We l-l-live in t-t-t-tumultuous times, said Maxie.

*****

Open Letter
The C. Lamprini Eel Proposal:
An Insult to the Inmates
of
Thing Street Asylum

Professor C. Lamprini Eel is an emeritus Dr. of Social Work from Pillaster U who styles himself PIONEER OF SOCIAL CHANGE.

Professor Eel's draft discussion paper for the REDICATION OF THING STREET as WHITE SQUIRREL WAY is totally heartless and stupid. While hypocritically claiming to want to dispel the stereotypes of insanity, this document reinforces the stereotype of maniac as mental nigger.

This document celebrates the patronizing authoritarian system that oppresses consumers and that so many stakeholders, clients and staff alike, have struggled to change. Professor Eel doesn't want to celebrate history; he wants to REVERSE it.

This document steals the victim's plaint and gives it to his oppressor. It is written for the tenured, the pensioned, the privileged and the rich, who steal the voice of the poor because they've nothing left but groats.

Trash this document, nearly every idea of which is rotten and ill-conceived, but fortunately practically unrealizable.

Professor Eel states as if it were his original discovery that too many suffering from mental hellness experience stigma and rejection.

Really? No! I welcome Eel's stigmata. A badge of MARTYRDOM! The ORDER of CANADA!

But what has THIS to do with (remaindered) coffee-table books, unctuous pomp and circumstance (i.e.: a re-enactment of the elaborate stone-laying ceremony), and homecoming events for alzheimer patients?

Dr. Praetorius admires Professor Eel's idea for ARTISTS in RESIDENCE at Thing STREET!

What about BEDS for PATIENTS?

Writers have fought to STAY OUT of MENTAL WARDS, but this Mountebank Professor, Emeritus Dr. of Social Work, Pioneer of Mental Hygiene, etc., wants to display us in his DIME MUSEUM, and expects us to lick his ass, FOR THE FREE RENT.

Maybe Praetorius was right! This was Eel's most ELECTRIC idea!

Formerly Eels were allowed to bowdlerize history in some shady backwater of the archive. They were spineless illustrations of the wisdom of suffering fools. Now they are bred and abetted, by ALAPALOOZAH and the rest who eviscerate our schools, libraries, hospitals, and asylums. They are their spineless accomplices and toadies, their too-willing propagandists.

Fire the PIONEERS OF SOCIAL CHANGE and give their money to the poor, the sick, the homeless, and the MAD. To me!

Give Eeel a lump of salt and wrap him in his own INTELLECTUALLY BANKRUPT PROPOSAL! Throw him onto Thing Street on GARBAGE NIGHT!

MARK the struggles of patients, clients, and staff at THING STREET ASYLUM. Stone the millennial BOOSTERS of the psychiatric jet-set! Steal back your own PIN-MONEY! Smash windows!

Sincerely,

Johnnieboy
Mental Nigger and
Stakeholder in Thing Street Asylum.

*****

Stuff it in! Cram it in!

*****

He sent a copy to Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre, but she did not respond.

*****

Max the Butcher had more creative work to do.

Johnny wondered what was so creative about holding hands with Professor Eel at Friendly Dyke Theatre. Maxie saying it was extremely naughty to attack someone in public. U-u-u-unforgivable. Especially if it was a reference.

Maxie insisted that even if Cecil's proposal for a musical comedy based on patient life at the Thing Street Asylum had been plastered on every telephone pole and bus shelter on Thing Street from Draine to Rancidvale, he would still have considered it terribly naughty of Johnny to attack it as he had done. But to attack a TOP SECRET document....

Johnny wanted to know how their trust extended to protecting fools.

Maxie whined that he was just too exhausted to say. They were living in t-t-tumultous t-t-times. And he had more creative work to do. It was n-naughty to attack someone in public. U-u-u-unforgivable.

Especially if it was a reference, Johnny repeated. Maxie had received large sums from a board of which he was a Director. And don't forget the Handy Institute's 50 Gs!!!

Max the Butcher covered his ears and hummed softly to himself while Johnny raved on about how tired he was of Maxie's elitist notion of politics as genteel discourse among like-minded directors, principally C. Lamprini Eel, Max the Butcher and other derelicts of the Mental Hygiene Movement.

Max the Butcher had suffered from divided allegiance for some time, privately referring to doctors as plotters while publicly sitting with them on Mental Boards, stuffing his kisser with Handy Institute dough, etc....

Sorry to do this to you, JOHNNY!

The power of evil was too great for weak minds....

*****

Grey taverns. Mansard rooves. Dormers. Filthy torn curtains. Graffiti on the doors. In the windows. Porko wondered, how much per week?

After the big demonstration. The usual litter of coffee cups and cigarette butts. Thugs in leather jackets carrying cardboard boxes full of dough-nuts. Shoving Porko into the gutter.

He wacted a gun. Or a dough-nut.

There were dough-nut shops on every corner. Coffeeslime. Timtits.

Outside a greasy spoon. Bums queuing up. Like at a theater. For a matinée. Orange and yellow windbreakers. Halloween colors....

A black in dreads directing them with a megaphone made out of a tightly rolled flyer from Foul Murder Chicken. Must have had a special on.

Porko always wondered if everybody got a seat. Maybe that's what dreadlocks was for. They didn't call it bum's rush for nothing.

The neighborhood was deteriorating. A black woman was getting busted. Scoffing a winter parka in the middle of July. From J. Zeus Murphy's Zombie Crypt Store. Turning to Porko: That's my coat. What is the matter with them?

Nobody turned around. Stealing from a J. Zeus Zombie Crypt Store. So low. Porko kept going.

The blazers were 5 dollars each. Then codes mysteriously appeared on the collars. A letter followed by a number. Like B2. Meaning this jacket was twenty bucks! After he spent the afternoon looking for it. They owed him!!!

Every morning Porko found flyers in the cat-pissy vestibule of his apartment building. From crackpots who thought the Dadanian Banks were surgically inserting microchips in their foreheads.

Everybody had a number. Porko's was in his dick. Only nobody phoned. Maybe it was up, so to speak....

Porko met something staggering down Thing Street. Battery-powered eyes from a broken Elvis statue. Turn-signals. Everybody knew where it was going. Before it did....

J. Zeus Murphy's Zombie Crypt Store coordinates. Floodpants. Funky!

Must have been a short somewhere. It signaled one way, so Porko went the other. Only it went the same way....

Peee-yew! Breath of onions and garlic chips. Imitation Polo in the final phase. It never changed his shorts.

S-scuse me. O, s-scuse me. It stammered. Making impotent gestures. Then Porko saw close-up. The Progressive Conservative campaign button in its greasy lapel.

I'm you're local P.C. candidate, it said. Vote Progressive Conservative in the upcoming election. Porko was astonished. It spoke. Distributed flyers.

Here, it said, magnanimously, Take the last one.

Fuck off, Porko thanked it. Recovering.

It winked at him. Lecherously, Porko thought. Beat it, he said. But it was only turning. It didn't have any ideas.

It was Franklin Imhotep Rite....

It wanted to give its kids the same Dadania its folks gave it.

Different strokes for different folks....

Porko's folks gave him the privatized parts. A social safety-net full of holes. Made of barbed wire. You didn't grab onto it on the way down. Not if you knew what you were doing. It tore out your guts....

Porko's case-file a meter thick. Every time he pinched one. The dimensions of his tape-worms. Jean Paul Sartre without glasses!

Porko's Worker had a literary bent.

*****

Dinner with Porko. Discussing scandalous mismanagement at the Dadanian Unemployment Bureau. Porko said he should keep copies of the slips advertising jobs that had expired three months ago. But still on the system, with today's date.

In particular for the Dadanian Democratic Exercise. Qualified voter wanted. Training session April 3-6. Days/evenings. Fax resumé indicating number of elections participated in. Sample completed ballot. To Zha Zha Gabor.

Johnny considered himself an experienced voter; however, the election had been held two months ago, so once again his qualifications, experience and communication skills had been totally wasted by bureaucratic bungling and ineptitude.

The election was over.

Johnny lost....

*****

Presto Mainline moved into the Leader of the Opposition's Official Residence, aka The LOTTO PALACE.

*****

Porko frantic. Escalating. Ricocheting off the walls of his beautiful Thing Street apartment. He had to tell Bunny Frozen. Their old boss at More Fucking Idiots. The perfidious Harry Cardigan. Just appointed Director General of the Institute of Dadanian Wankers. Where Bunny herself had just applied for a job!

Porko had to prepare himself to meet Mr. Bunny Frozen at the Fartful Codger. A besotted Anglophile's mistaken dream of a limy booze-can.

Mr. Bunny Frozen raising a pint or twelve. Porko braced himself to deliver the news.

He tore up back-issues of Sow magazine. Stuffed the pieces into his shopping bag. Made him look important on Thing Street. A clerk of substance. Entrusted with all kinds of important documents and sensitive material disguised as trash in a No Frillies shopping bag.

The perfect cover! For his big summit with Mr. Frozen.

He hobbled out the door of his ground-floor bachelor apartment. Nodded his approval of the series of identically padlocked doors. Identically regular. Therapeutic milieu....

He thought it was high-toned. Made him feel safe at night. With his Complete Works. Only problem was things kept mistaking him for the janitor.

Hobbled down the hall and around the corner into the beautiful lobby with the lovely Group of Seven-Eleven prints. Till the Thing Street punks got'em.

He struggled with the great doors. He flung himself against them. Clutching his shopping bag. They parted. Like fat cheeks parting. Like Albert Schweitzer's performance of Bach's prelude....

He emitted himself into the courtyard. Exhausted.

The gaslight glowed quaintly. Nice touch. Romantic. The grass needed cutting. The paint was peeling off the eves. The eves were peeling off the roof....

A vehicle of the Hogtown Transit Commission lumbered up Thing Street. He caught it....

He was on the roll.

*****

Thing Street Asylum

Mayor Smell Gassman in his giant mega-stretch limo. Bagman....

Cruising Thing Street. Annoyed by the stench of that Hogtown Transit vehicle. Fucking public transit. Stank like the public. He'd privatize them too.

Visiting mobsters on Thing Street. Passing Porko's building. Public Housing! Made him puke.

Imagining those copy-clerks. Evicted. Sqatting on the curb. Shopping carts full of their Complete Shit.

*****

Thing Street! Onward towards Workfare Concentration Camps. Twenty-year-olds slaving on highways. Chained together ten hours a day. Sleeping in bunk-beds in barracks. Cleaning toilets.

A steady drip of refugees. Into toxic Lake Dadania. Shopping carts full of quilts, computers, and Complete Shit. Joining the River of Refuse....

*****

A Friendship Centre. Things sprawled on the steps of the former Dadanian Imperial Business Bank. Worn concrete. Worn things. The bums with Outreach papers. Morning paper, mister. Crassus Blackie didn't start that way. Though he sells papers too. And buys them. Smart bum!

*****

The Russian jewelry store. The usual clientèle. Clients!

Porko entered. The air sickly stale. A fat Russian in a dirty track-suit. Glasses. Heavy black frames. Greasy-white hair sticking out from under his baseball cap. A plastic TAG HEUR box on the glass counter in front of him.

The Russian jeweler. Short. Balding. A lens stuck in a piece of wire wrapped around his head. Enormous diamond-studded pinky rings. Wide collar spread open over heavy gold necklaces. Whining that he no liked quartz watches.

Seiko!! Timex!!! Pitoey!

The man in the track-suit protesting. No! No Timex (Pitoey, Pitoey)!

The jeweler sticking his wrist in his face. Demanding. This Timex?

The other Russian bent over the jeweler's outstretched arm. Like he was going to kiss his hand. Porko stole a peak too. Patek Philipe! Boy, o boy!

How much?

Free, for you.

Come on.

Eight thousand dollar. The jeweler told him.

Come on.

Sorry, comrade. You don't know watches.

Come on.

You don't know watches. So he showed him some old silver. Removing pieces from the glass cases behind him. He peered at the hallmarks through an enormous magnifying glass.

Porko looked at the watches under the counter. The glass smudged. The condensation of bad breath.

*****

The mechanical gorilla in front of Active Surplus. Red eyes lips mouth and palms. Hairy limbs. Directing the hordes along Thing Street West.

Franklin Imhotep Rite....

Everyone in black. So far as they were covered at all. Otherwise their skin unhealthy pink and white. Not tanned yet. Still a bit cool. Goose bumps!

The tall guy selling his armload of books and compact disks. Clean cut. Dark haired. Bespectacled. Fortyish. Faintly scholarly. Barely respectable. Late lecturer look. Seedy. Porko had seen him before. Showing his books to a young man with a pony-tail and a goatee. Standing on a black marble plaque commemorating Dadanian writers.

Susquehannah Mooday. Maple Gallon. Tiffany Finelay. Their books stacked up to his chin.

No sales.

Pioneers of Alienation

*****

The Mooday Motel. Grace Tart's residence, after she butchered the boss's wife. Playing air-piano for a prune-faced hag in lappets....

For Susquehannah Mooday....

Our great forerunner. All those state loonies invested in Mooday Studies. Johnny couldn't write a word against her but some blockhead wrote back telling him to be sure to read so and so's chemical analysis of the contents of the Mooday Family Crapper at the time she composted Roughing My Bush.

It was full of lead.

A World Class Writer with a bipolar imagination. Universally important and never-ending. A philosopher! A social critic! A martyr for art! Her terrible sufferings during the composition of The Clearing vs. My Bush....

Her painful and frightening hairy fits (delirium tremens?). Her exhausting and worrisome near-death experiences (alcohol poisoning?). Her romantically-inclined Victorian instability in pre-Confederation Dadania (she voted Reform?)....

Read Snatching the Miter: The Love Letters of Susquehannah Mooday and Bishop Johnny Hogtown....

Read Shields! Peterman! Thurston! Ballstadt! A fervent imagination confronting a DADANIAN PACIFIER LOCOMOTIVE....

*****

O the MBC....

Blaring from car radios....

Hayseeds reading excerpts from Mooday's incomparable Life in the Shavings. Obsessed about delicate women and helpless children. Herself as delicate as a teamster. Feeling good about herself for excusing Catholics because they're Irish. Catholicism for keeping the Irish under control:

> The tendency to hate belongs to the race, not to the religion.... If the priest and the confessional are able to restrain the lower orders from the commission of gross crime, who shall say that they are without their use? (Life in the Shavimgs, 26-7)

During her infamous visit to the insane asylum she met her neighbor from Belleville, committed for child abuse. Mooday burlesques her with a typically awkward attempt at dialect: How dar'd you to leave the cradle widout my lave (266). Her own diction suddenly becomes self-consciously, decorous (prissy) and deranged:

> Alas, poor maniac! How could I tell her that the girl she had chastised so undeservedly had died in early womanhood, and her son, a fine young man of twenty, had committed suicide, and flung himself off the bridge into the Moira river only a few months before.... I, for one, fervently thanked God for my sanity.... (Life in the Clearings, 266)

*****

Porko's Big Summit Meeting went like this:

Porko: Hello. Mr. Frozen?

Mr. Bunny Frozen: Yesh? Washamatter?

Porko: I have NEWS, sir!

Mr. Bunny Frozen: Shpillit!

Porko: Harry Cardigan's got a new job!

Mr. Bunny Frozen: Yesh?

Porko: At the Institute of Dadanian Bankers!!!

Mr. Bunny Frozen: Zhatso. Pull up a shar. Have a drink Porko.

Porko: No. I really must be going. I have postponed an important rendez-vous to deliver this news. I am already very late.

Mr. Bunny Frozen: Zo go'bye.

*****

Thing Street Asylum

Porko waiting for Johnny in the office high atop the Cecil Eatone Centre. Sour little pussy face. Shiny bald wiener butt bobbing up and down in his cubicle. Typing a ridiculous memo to his office supervisor.

*****

Porko felt like there was a little piece of shit dribbling out his asshole. The itching drove him crazy. He spread a pile of briefing books over the indoor-outdoor in his cubicle. He dropped his double-knits, ripped off his panties, and squatted over the black pressboard binders. Dragged his fat buttocks like a weiner dog with worms. Rubbed his crack up and down the spines. Mmmm. Felt better.

The fecal matter dangling from his asshairs suddenly took on a life spirit destiny of its own. Acquired the meaning that he sincerely believed had deliberately evaded him all his life. Successfully too.

Thinking of Dini Petme doing a public interest spot on educational TV almost got him hard.

The itching abated.

*****

Johnny waiting for Porko.

*****

Seeing Johnny strutting along in short-shorts. Pissed Porko off. Johnny saw the hatred goose-step across his ugly fat kisser. Under the greasy baseball cap. Like a rotten potato. A weed.

Porko wagged a flipper. Waddled toward him. Stiff-necked paretic Mengele. Toting his latest hate-crimes in a shopping bag from the Thing Street No Frillies.

His leg-bag of slowly accumulating piss and paper scraps. His catheter with a little silver-wire pipe that went straight through his withered prepuce into his addled brain. What a drip. Sure was constant though.

Johnny smelled it all the way across Thing's Park. Porko's stench. Pee yew!

Porko always said he had a touch of the plegia. Whenever he talked about his job. Sixty-year old mailboy running his ass off for a bunch of boobs, cooks, and all-round fucking idiots. Only as Porko described it there was a physical component to his job. Otherwise it was mentally quite demanding.

Sitting on his can in his cubicle all day. Reading the e-mail from human resources. As if it was all addressed to his fat stinking self. Wanted. Policy Analyst. Wanted. Deputy Minister. Just the thing.

For Porko's delicate condition. The hemidemisemiplegia. The sotto voce heart murmur. The cholesterol. Johnny knew he always gorged his fat guts on butter-fried bacon and eggs right before the blood test. Lied to the stupid gullible doctor that he hadn't touched a thing for twenty-four hours. Skewing the research. Still hoping for that package deal.

Johnny told him to take poison. His package deal a pine coffin.

Johnny knew Porko was really just a lousy syph. Doc Handy was right. Had the paresis bad. Soon he'd be trying to sell him Queen's Pork itself. Telling him he was really a symbolic analyst at More Fucking Idiots. Only his job still had this physical component.

Hi, Johnny. We're looking summery today. Fag, he thought. Doesn't waddle like a fucking duck. In short shorts. Quack quack quack. Fortunately Johnny couldn't read Porko's mind. He didn't think he had one; otherwise he would have agreed. Porko had himself pegged.

*****

The thunderous applause of a thousand grrr-l tootsies hysterically stamping the floor of Massive Hall. The fake-Moorish balconies visibly bouncing and swaying as the specially-rented Hammond farted the theme from Chariots of Fire. Hotsy squatting in the front row in a rented tuxedo. It had belonged to Orson Welles. It was a little tight.

At his right. In a fresh fright wig. Elmer B. Porko, loyal retainer. At his left, in a stunning big sombrero, sat Professor Feruccio Putrid-Pallid, his mentor and spiritual advisor. Behind them the Pissers lolled on heaps of expensive hides and human-looking skin, tootsies propped up on the sweetest little pig-shaped hot-water bottles. The snouts wore caps.

Old Lady Pisser leafed through a copy of her latest publication, Preparing Primate Feet for Table: The Fine Art of Rhodesian Cooking. She really outdid herself on toe-jam.

At last Grand Vizier Alapaloozah arrived with his private football club. Every big broad-shouldered mobster held a tiny bottle of Mr. Goodass Capsecum Pepper Sauce.

Pioneers of Alienation

Their little tootsies furiously stomped. The sweat flew off their knees like spittle. The Cretin warmed to their applause. They chanted Cre-tin, Cre-tin, Cre-tin. Then a slightly different chant began: Mau-rice, Mau-rice, Mau-rice. Then the pace changed again as they chanted Do-it do-it do-it do-it do-it.

The Prime Sinister shrugged. Vox populi, vox dei. He began his favorite Maurice Chevalier imitation, a salty rendition of Tank heaven for liddle grrr-ls.... The crowd went wild.

Feruccio Putrid-Pallid was bored out of his fucking brain. He wilted in his sombrero. His handlebar mustachio drooped. If only they were boys.... Salty white runners. Addidas, Puma, Reebok, he murmured softly to himself. Then faster, and faster.

A fat butch strode to the podium beside the Hammond.

Ahem, ahem.

The organist thundered a few chords from the grosse fugue of J.S. Bach.

Wah! Porko leapt up. Stubby arms waving and flailing like thalidomide baby-flippers.

Wo-ah, wo-ah; earth-quake, he screamed, clutching the brass railing as the balcony heaved like a storm-tossed lifeboat. I'm a woman, he shrieked, hoping a man would save him.

Porko had forgotten that except for a few proud pa-pas like Hotsy, everyone else was a woman too. Being one himself would not have helped much, under the circumstances.

AHEM, repeated the fat butch.

Sssshhh, went Old Lady Pisser, right in Porko's ear. Hotsy slugged him. That calmed him down.

The organism paused and a sudden hush fell over Massive Hall.

Ahem. The prime minister will announce the award for citizenship

An explosion of foot-stamping, crying, and screaming as....

Alapaloozah, Grand Vizier of Dadania, tap-danced onto the stage. Accompanied by a chorus line of stunningly beautiful topless mobsters with V-tapered torsos and washboard abs, filling the air with a fine mist of pepper spray.

Everyone's eyes immediately filled with tears. The emotion. The capsecum. Not since the opening of the Dada Shoe Museum had the Pissers been so overwhelmed. Feruccio Putrid-Pallid wept into his sombrero. Even Porko had to restrain a sob.

Or maybe it was at the prospect of dying in a Mid-Atlantic marine disaster, the victim of sexism. Hotsy held his breath. Hoping his daughter, Carlotta would win.

De award fo city-sinship go to....

Another explosion of foot stamping as the organist himself stamped his Dix-clad feet upon the keyboard, cake-walking like a darkie minstrel.

Pickin' dem up an' puttin' dem down .... the organist sang, donning a topper that till now he had kept hidden under the bench. The girls flew into helpless hysterics....

Again! ordered the Prime Sinister.

Yet another explosion, another mad arpeggio on the keyboard, followed by the kind of cake-walk that had never been seen north of the 49th parallel. It made the cotton grow in Nunavit.

Suddenly it occurred to everyone that all these years the Prime Minister had really been doing a minstrel act. That broadly camp franglais he spoke was pure Uncle Tom. He must have only just realized it himself.

Yowza, he exclaimed, and recoiled from the microphone where he had caught a glimpse of his reflection; it had shocked him, it was so fucking beautiful. Two retainers, the beauty-spots dazzling on their ruggedly handsome mugs, dragged a massive enormously heavy jewel-encrusted tub into the centre of the stage between the Hammond and the podium. The organist doffed his topper to mop his brow with a red bandanna. He rolled up the sleeves of his morning coat and returned to his instrument. In preparation to really get down.

In single file, as the organist softly played the opening chords of Try-y-y Me, each of the beautiful mobsters approached, with his little red bottle extended, and gingerly dashed a few red drops into the bejeweled crucible.

Oooo, weee, went the little girls, eyes as big as platters.

The Solicitor General draped the Dadanian flag over the P.M.'s shoulders like a cape. The crowd gasped as he extended his elegantly Dix-clad tootsie over the brimful vessel.

Unable to restrain herself any longer, Old Lady Pisser burst out of her husband's embrace and shimmied like a fireman down a fake-Moorish column right onto the stage at Alapaloozah's feet. She knew what to do. The organist pounded, mobs of hysterically stamping little girls swarmed the stage, and the Prime Minister broke into the ecstatic strains of Hot Sauce.

She reminded Hotsy of nothing less than an armadillo, her active tongue, seemingly with a mind of its own, darting between the interstices of the prime ministerial foot, seeking the elusive jam.

Alapaloozah jumped back, and awarded himself the Citizenship Prize.

No one noticed the two tightly clenched fat greasy little fists slowly losing their grip on the shiny brass railing.... They assumed that throwing a melon onto the stage was a part of the Minstrel Show.

Fortunately Hotsy had already borrowed twenty bucks from Porko for dough-nuts; otherwise, his death might have spoiled the evening. Hotsy loaded Putrid-Pallid and the Pissers into a van of the Bipolar Paint Company.

Carlotta sat upfront with himself, the proud papa. She looked great in her St. Demento's Architecture School for G-r-rls uniform, all black fishnet and leather. Old Lady Pisser especially admired the shoes: black stiletto high-heals. Stupendous! They headed for a Coffeeslime.

Everyone found it deeply satisfying, although they keenly regretted Carlotta's winning only the unprestigious Mental Hygiene Trophy.

Win some, lose some. Everyone said.

*****

Johnny addressing another Open Letter to the Inmates of Thing Street Asylum.

The failure of Emeritus Professor C. Lamprini Eel, a Mental Hygienst turned dramaturge with the Ratshit Theatre Project, to recognize Genius, is the Unpardonable Sin.

For researching this shit my whole take was a remaindered copy of a bad history of a mental hospital, and a slimy "thank-you" letter from none other than the Pioneer of Alienation.

C. Lamprini Eel!

Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre gets PAID! EVERY TIME!

I find it especially ironic, given Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre's latest INCOHERENT SPEECH about “Theatre as Empowerment.” Empowerment for herself. Not for Johnny Boy!

How about SOME MONEY!!!

I was precisely their kind of client, according to the latest ANTI-OPRESSION THEORY. A bum! A remittance man who never got mail, a flaneur in flood-pants. So much for THEORY.

The overlapping of diegetic with institutional space notwithstanding, the public utterances of the Rathsit Theatre Company satisfy the POSITIVE CRITERIA FOR SCHIZOPHRENIA in the DSMIV.

After researching the text of La Pazzia and adapting it as a musical, I worked with the archivist on an illustrated history of RHODESIAN MADNESSS for the mezzanine overlooking the cafeteria. In discussing diegetic space, V. F. Weasel-Theatre should at least have mentioned that when La Pazzia jumped off the balcony, she articulated a bridge with the past (as it were).

The display was interfered with, but the play went smoothly, unimpeded by Dr. Praetorius and the hospital administration. This was just the sort of DSMIV thing the Troupe specialized in. THORAZINE THEATRE! They could display anti-masturbation devices, and perform the VERY ACT! We were busted, for mentioning it in a caption.

We threatened to hang shrouds over the pictures.

The Ratshit Theatre's production of La Pazzia was a vehicle for V. F. Weasel-Theatre and her bull-dyker cronies. It had nothing to do with the stigmata of mental illness, least of all removing them.

A few hours before show-time I was sitting on the mezzanine. I heard voices! C. Lamprini Eel talking about me. No, it wasn't an aural hallucination of schizophrenia. He said he wanted to get rid of me, but he couldn't. I was with the gays. Imagine what it must have been like for gay patients!

I finally have to object to claims V. F. Weasel-Theatre made in her prologue for shock value. She knows more about POMO theatre theoy, than mental illness. I got a PhD! In 18th-century faglit from Montage U., but for years I've been a support worker in group homes and shelters on Thing Street. There's nothing in La Pazzia that would shock me, or any Mental Hell-care worker....

Workman's original article isn’t about patient dignity. It's about the impossibility of identifying the cause of insanity, in a Positiron Brain-Scan.

Pioneers of Alienation

La Pazzia isn't a patient , or an individual. She's a PERSONIFICATION OF MADNESS....

After all the bullshit about abolishing physical restraint, Workman only abolished emoitonal restraint, for himself....

Workman was a sensationalist, a scare-monger, an hysterical sob-sister who unscrupulously exploited masturbation as a plague....

A PIONEER!

*****

He'd already sent out forty or fifty on the same tired, stupid topic.

The hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Provincial Lunatic Asylum on Thing. Fifteen fucking decades of on-site barbarism. Cultural continuity worth celebrating. Hallowed ground.

A kick in the chops, hands in muffs. Wet packs, insulin, hydroelectroconvulsoshock....

Defective degenerate bed-wetting bowel-voiding self-polluting paretic mono-dypso-maniacal hereditary mental weaklings.

That's the doctors.[37]

*****

Max the Butcher and Emeritus Prof. C. Lamprini Eel. Big reconciliation scene.

Cecil playing his favourite tune: the adagietto from Mahler's 5th on a scratchy old vinyl LP of a performance of the Columbia Symphony conducted by Bruno Walter.

Maxie studying Professor Lamprini's shiny bald pate. His whispy goatee....

He looked exactly like.... Jane Jacobs!

Only MALE!

God will not damn the lunatic's soul....

Sorry to do this to you, JOHNNY!

They made oral history....

*****

Trixie's tits burst out of her halter-top. She was really pumped up. She marched straight to the back of the dive. Wally was revising his old Ph.D. thesis. The Political Novels of C.P. Snow. Every year he sent it off somewhere to get published. Only it came back.

Every year. Really, quite mysteriously.

This year he sent it off to Walter Wang. He liked the name. Moreover everybody said. they'd publish anything.

Wrong.

Walter said it was shit.

Oh, well. Maybe it still needed a little fine tuning. Maybe thirty years wasn't long enough. Thirty years! A lifetime!

---

[37] One Mr Ross, discharged on March 19 1911, implies that his bad relationship with a certain Dr. W (which he characterized as "open war") and Dr W's rather unsavory character, contributed to his being committed to the Asylum. Dr. W., he wrote, "owns the soul of nearly every man in a radius of 25 miles." Dr. W. had built the block of offices in which the local Athletic Association rented rooms, so as current president he was also in conflict of interest. Dr. W. had defeated Mr. Ross's uncle in the mayoral election of 1907-8. He was also, at least according to Mr. Ross, "practically the whole school board." This fact, besides the hostility between him and patient's uncle, might have aggravated the Mr. Ross's animus against him (and vice versa?). Mr. Ross had been a teacher himself. This might account for his slightly lurid characterization of Dr. W.:

> Dr. W. is a boozer [and a?] fighter, and last March [he] got too merry with the Indian women on the reserve. That is only one of many orgies that he indulged in frequently. He is a race track gambler and expert card player. He is as smooth as silk and as clever as the best.

Wally was pissed.

Wally-a-wallah! Sugarstick! I just realized. Capitalists manipulate gender! Be a lady when it suits them. Otherwise, be a whore!

I shoulda put it in my dissertation. I shoulda!

Shaddup! Can't you see I'm researching?

But Wally! Maybe you could put it in the U of Teat Quarterly? Whaddya think?

Shit. I donno. We gotta publish somma duh really high scholarshit. The chair's got this paper on Frank Sinatra....

Oh no. Frankie? Again?

Shaddup! Whadda yu know? Frankie's hot! Cultural Studies!

Ah cumon. Jus cuz he's chairman. At least I know how tuh fuck ya, Wally-a-wallah. We're 'sociates.... Colleagues.... Proteejays!

Ah, shit Trixie! There's Lydia Lipshitz. Got something about the pomo....

Wa? Tha's even wurz than Frankie. At leze Frankie cud sing wunz....

Shaddup, bitch. She got the neoconservatim behind'er. She's workin for The Man! If anybuddy goes, it gotta be thuh chair I guez. But it's an insult to duh system nonethelezz! What the point livin ole enuff tuh outlive all yur buddies what croaks if yuh doan get tuh be duh chair what getz tuh publish all yur shit audomadic in duh gran ole organ udder U uh Titz, duh U uh Hog Teat Quart'lea?! Ebby thing! Downa de lass dribble! Duh lass beer fart! Wherz justitz?

Ah Wally. Duh nest numbah!

Duh whole ting! Duh U uh Hog Teat Quart'lea Speshul All Frankie Ishew!

Tanks sweetie. And Lydia?

Dat bitch? Duh QUEEN uh duh POMO?

Dat won!

Fug huh!

*****

Porko hadn't been killed in the Massive Music Hall disaster after all. Exploding a melon on-stage in the middle of the Prime Minister's foot-bath was a part of the act.

It had happend just as Porko plummeted into a heap of towels and clean gym-socks. They softened his fall and probably saved his life.

*****

They ascended like fake gods in a theatrical machine, to the top of the hospital. A woman who boarded at Four went to push Nine, but finding that button already illuminated, protested that everybody wanted the Penthouse. There they disembarked, where the sign at the end of the short hallway indicated the direction of the rooms, just like in a hotel, Johnny thought: nine twenty-eight to nine forty-one to the left, and nine hundred to nine twenty-seven to the right. At the other end were the smoking room and the TV lounge. They caught a glimpse of a lean, tall, even elegant elderly woman in a blue nightgown, her smoking stand on one side and her intravenous unit on the other. They turned sharply left at nine thirty-three, where Johnny's sister was.

He walked straight to his sister's bed. She wore the bright, red plaid extra-large mens' night-shirt he had bought her the day before at Simpsons. There were three other women in the room: Mrs. Martens, Mrs. Kenty, and Mrs. Howitt. Each wore the regulation blue gown supplied by the hospital, slit at the back and thighs so that guests caught a glimpse of bony buttocks whenever one of them got up to go the bathroom. Porko halted two yards into the room.

Johnny introduced them. They said hello, but Porko came no closer, because of his cold, as he explained again. He squinted behind his heavy black glasses. His brown leather coat, which he had fished out of the garbage somewhere, hung open, and he carried his shopping bag of paper scraps in one hand, as he tried to comb his snaky hair with the other. Johnny noticed how the faded fur lining on the collar blended with Porko's own natural dirty-white covering: disgusting!

How did it happen? Porko politely enquired, making conversation.

Getting into a cab.

Just like that.

Like that, she corrected him, snapping her fingers. We break down too easily, I think. We all do.

Something to think about. He did so, regularly.

In the place where I go for therapy, they have all sorts of X-rays hung on the wall. For decoration, I guess. They all look ape-like, atavistic. Especially the ones of feet. Yours would be especially! She laughed at Johnny as he looked down at his shoes, size thirteen.

Look, I'd better not stay, said Porko, rubbing his nose, but shuffling his own feet uneasily. I'll leave you two to visit. And he did.

I'll see you soon, Johnny assured him, as Porko slunk away with his bag of scraps. He lives only a few minutes away, Johnny explained, turning to his sister.

That's closer than you think, she added.

What? He wanted her to explain.

Well, where do you think you live?

What?

I mean really LIVE.

He still failed to understand and supposed he never would, because immediately the phone rang and he heard her say, he's here.

It was someone named Bill. Johnny had talked to him only yesterday, but he asked after him, if only for the sake of convention. They had intended to have dinner at some place on Thing Street, but now Bill suggested that Johnny come to his house instead: it would be quieter. When Johnny asked if he could make it some other time, Elvira smiled. Of course, Bill said that would be fine. Johnny had an unpleasant image of Bill trying to bite someone's ear at a party, which he could not quite dispel, given the contemporary preoccupation with hygiene; yes, he was engaged for the evening.

Elvira offered him her soup, and Mrs. Howitt asked if he would like her milk. They told her she needed it for calcium, or her bones did. But she never touched the stuff. When she had difficulty opening her drawer wide enough to get her cigarettes, because the bed and the cadenza were too close together, Johnny parted them for her. Similarly, when hanging up the phone Mrs. Martens missed the hook, dropping the receiver noisily onto the floor beside the bed, Johnny retrieved it for her. Like some kind of animal, he thought. Or, thinking better of it, like a human being. So when Mrs. Kenty felt thirsty he went all the way down to the eighth floor and fetched her a can of cold, diet pop.

I'll call you later this evening, Johnny promised. Is there anything you want?

She gazed into her glass. I'd frame them.

Johnny just looked at her.

It's my barren womb, she explained.

Enjoy your visit with Porko, she said.

He waved good-bye to Mrs. Martens, and to Mrs. Howitt and Mrs. Kelty, who were watching Wild Kingdom on T.V.

He never saw anyone again.

*****

Porko wanted to get Johnny The Boy Midas committed to the Thing Street Asylum. Just for laughs. Professor Eel also wanted to. Only he wasn't laughing. Neither for that matter was Max the Butcher. There was real danger that their totally trumped-up diagnoses would cancel one another out. Johnny Boy could not be a catatonic paranoid schizophrenic all at once, not if E. Bleuler had anything to do with it.

What Johnny could be was a layabout lubberly lout, a slovenly slut, a lewd lazar, a blackguardly blockhead, a performing pervert, a nihilistic necrophile, etc. It could truly be said that Johnny Boy Midas was all things to all things, but especially to men in short-shorts. Everything anything for a quarter.

Porko figured after he got Johnny Boy committed to the Thing Street Asylum he'd steal his masterpieces, and say he wrote them himself. Of course! Who would doubt it? If they did, who would gainsay him, Elmer B. Porko, Clerko Magnifico et Munificens. The Leash could check his Latin later.

The old fart was probably dead with the heat and pollution. He had hep C from sharing catheters....

Too bad Porko never got promoted. He kissed the man's hairy fat ass enough. Harry Cardigan's too! Too bad he never got married. He got hard enough. Even Sean got him hard. Especially Sean, his craven conscience timorously whined. Shut up, fuckin' bitch.

When everything else was so manly, why did he have to a woman inside him, nagging. Good thing he still had Johnny. Tonight he'd make him wait. Then he'd waddle out like Alapaloozah's own meaty turd swaddled in a trench-coat two sizes too small. He'd nod, once, in Johnny's direction.

*****

Porko intimated to Sean he was beginning to be concerned about Johnny. He stuck out his enormous flabby gut. He winked. He was no scaredy-cat. No sireee! Sean eyed Porko and withdrew a little behind his great partition with the lovely MONEY FUND INTERNATIONAL logo: horny vulture claws gripping the globe like ripe carrion.

Sean's fear mingled with something else, which one true man never expressed to another.

No, Porko corrected himself, he was worried....

W-w-worried? Why, Mr. Porko! You? W-worried? W-why w-whatever in the w-w-world could w-w-w-worry a m-m-man l-l-like y-yew?

Even I worry sometimes, Seanny.

Y-yew? About

Yes, about JOHNNY!

Y-y-you d-d-don't really think

He's Valerie Fabricant the Second!!!

Oh, no!

He thinks it's funny to shoot professors!

Oh, Mr. Porko!

And DOCTORS!

Goodness!

He laughs about it!

It isn't nice to shoot professors. Or doctors, either.

If the fucker ever calls for me, just say I'm OUT! O.U.T. OUT!! Got it, son?

Oh, y-y-yes sir, Mr. Porko.

That's a boy! Provoke him a little. Make the fuckin' pinko commie faggit pansy egghead commit a politically incorrect verbal indiscretion. Get it on tape. We'll use it against him at the committal hearing. Then I'll take you out to get your passport photos done again.

Oh, Mr. Porko. That w-w-will b-be my th-third s-set th-this m-m-month.

Two, Seanny! Don't forget one of them is for Porkikins.

Oh, s-s-sir!

*****

Johnny was reviewing his Mental Board things. Pondering recent history. After pooling their resources they had the following valuable artefacts.

Three cardboard boxes containing 11 obsolete voice recorders. With Edison AMBEROLS. For oral history.

Three long pincers. Possibly for horses, but suitable for patients too.

One small box of apothecary's weights. For drugs. One apparatus for mass injections. For a lot more drugs.

One canvas restraining device. For when the drugs failed.

One electric machine. Low current generator. For when the canvas restraining devices failed.

One wooden newel post to a spiral staircase. One spiral staircase. For when everything else failed.

Two old bricks. To hurl at quislings and mental hygiene pimps on the way up.

Two large leather-upholstered arm-chairs (beaten, torn). From the Medical Superintendent's office. Notice how beaten and torn.

One rusty nail. Suitable for hanging.

And a key to the ward of a Lunatic Asylum. Long since demolished. The ward for incurables.

*****

Porko had his calls transferred to Sean in reception. Johnny dialed from a booth in Disunity Station. Somebody had been using it for a urinal. Somebody whose urine stank like a tom cat's, on Thorazine....

Johnny heard the three rings, then the click as the call was transferred. He didn't want to squander a third of his total assets, so he hung up. The third clattered down the little chute into the change repository. He dug it out, with a sticky forefinger.

He deposited it again, and dialed the number. The same thing happened: three rings, then a click, as the call was transferred.

Again, and again. And, again.

*****

Sean clenched his bruised and hairy thighs. With terror. And excitement. Catching a LOONY! Boyoboy.

It's him! It's him!! It's HIM!!! His voice cracking with stress.

Porko stuck his fat kisser around the partition.

That's it, boy. He winked and nodded encouragement. Reel'im in. Get'im, tiger.

Oh, Mr. Porko. I can't wait for those passport photos!

That's the spirit, boy!

Pioneers of Alienation

*****

Johnny was nearly overcome with the fumes from the human catpiss. Who went in that booth anyway? Cat Woman? Did women piss in phone booths?

O tempore! O mores!

But he had forgotten the ablative case and The Leash was never around when you needed him. He was probably dead from heat and exhaustion and over-indulgence at U of Titz faculty club trough-outs. Their flatulence alone was worse than the concentrated sewer-gas of a thousand Hogtown alleys.

Eating and eating. Farting and farting. Their noxious gases eating and eating, corroding their treasured master-works....

The Group of Seven-Eleven....

Raising now the left cheek, now the right....

Tomb Tombson and K.Y. Gammon, respectively....

Suddenly, somebody blammed away on the side of the booth. Johnny snapped out it.

Fuck off, ass-hole. This one's occupied.

Goddam whippersnapper, got no respect fer yer elders.

I said fuck yuh, yuh stoopid ole far....

Then he realized. It was just like a Rube Goldberg epiphany.

Who would have believed? Only it was so stupid, it was just like life.

Ulysses S. Dogleish! That explained it. Everything became clear. Except (of course) the air....

This was his spot!

S-s-say, Doctor....

Johnny really laid it on. With a trowel. Only it was so rotten you could have taken it off wiith a spoon.

I w-w-wonder if you'd be g-g-good enough t-t-to t-t-take a l-l-look at this L-latin.....

*****

Johnny had been calling again for the last fifteen minutes.

He's obsessed, Sean observed.

Definitely the manic phase of bipolar disorder, was Porko's learned diagnosis.

Finally Johnny lost his patience. He rolled the dice. He let his call ring through.

Hello, hello, he said. To the silent ether.

Sean nearly leapt out of his chair, except he was paralyzed from the waist down.

Porko glanced around the partition. Sean's entire torso jerked convulsively, as if a shark had bitten off his legs.

Porko nodded. Sean hung up.

Sorry to do this to you, JOHNNY!

He was wiped out....

*****

The cops booked Johnny for vandalism. He told the judge he lost control when somebody answered the phone. It cost him twenty-five cents, a third of his total assets.

Porko attended a special session of Night Court. He listend with satisfaction as Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre pronounced sentence, in black-face....

I been following this narrative for years, awaiting Judgment Day.

Your latest cynical communique provides me with just such an occasion.

I find totally preposterous, your demand that Thing Street's great liberal theosophist, that Pioneering Benefactor of Mad Kind, C. Lamprini Eel, PAY you for your WORK.

White Boy, this exaggerated sense of entitlement proceeds from the forgone conclusion, that you should be suffered to exist.

T aint so!

Based on the evidence before me [fart! whinny!], I'm not inclined to believe that your rights have been violated, or indeed, that you got any.

Love,
Foxy.

Her Honour sounded just like Sandra Shannon.

She recommended a psychiatric examination, by C. Lamprini Eel, Ph.D., following a private session in her chambers during which Johnny Boy would be invited to slake his appetite for HOT FOOD, by EATING her TWAT.

Porko took Sean to NIAGARA FALLS.

*****

Some folks turned white overnight. He turned nappy brown.

*****

Porko was quietly writing in his Shitty Home Compartment when he heard the leathery squeaking against his window. It was those punks again. Wanting to clean his window for a quarter.

They were getting bolder. They brandished their squeegess in his fat kisser when he passed them at the light. They wanted to wipe his glasses. No thanks and fuck yourselves, low-grade morons.

But it wasn't the squeegee punks.

A-hah, Porko exclaimed, reaching for the sharp-pointed stake that he always kept handy, look what just flew in from Scarberia....

*****

Dr. Clarke's Individual Approach found a likely disease in Dementia Praecox. In an article from from the British Medical Journal (1906) called Dementia Praecox, Clarke observed that, even if Kraepelin himself had yet to give an absolute definition of dementia praecox (the term was fortunate, especially as applied to cases which couldn't fairly be called precocious, and others which were written off the records as recovered), the Kraepelin Idea was the most promising for the future of psychiatry, the one that pointed to the most hopeful line of investigation to put psychiatry on a more solid basis than had yet been the case (756). Clarke was confident that, with more clinical work, it would do so, especially with clinical observation and surveillance of ever younger members of the lower classes.

Clarke elaborated the idea in a second article, from the Canadian Journal of Medicine and Surgery (June, 1907) reiterating comments he'd originally made in 1906 before the American Medico-Psychological Association in Boston, in which he'd urged a careful study of school children in order to weed out weaklings likely to develop into cases of dementia praecox. Anticipating arguments for eugenics that would be made by members of the Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene in the 20s and 30s, Clarke observed in this piece that if left to itself nature would weed out such cases on its own, but Civilization and Culture were not necessarily governed by Nature's Laws (344). Consequently, Clarke implied, dementia praecox was becoming more prevalent; alienists had to do nature's work themselves.

*****

Dr. Praetorious invited C. Lamprini Eel to perform the next Bulletin live before a select audience of doctors and social workers at a specially convened plenary session of the Mental Board and Night Court. It was to be based on real life personal experiences, confirming the transformative powers of the newly re-organized Ministry of Shopping Centres and Model Homes.

It was a black-tie affair for everyone but Cecil, who wore the customary combat fatigues, and a peasant blouse with plenty of cleavage. He was backlit, a baby spot gleaming on his tonsure. After a brief junket, he intoned, in a husky voice, befitting the solemnity of the occasion.

Upon retirement I faced an empty and meaningless existence. My clients deserted me, the speaking engagements dropped off, and Eli Lily forgot my Christmas present!!!

I fell into a steep decline, and got caught stealing tips from the local Druxies. I didn't need the money. It was for kicks!!!

I was arrested, and sent to Mental Hell NIGHT COURT. The judge paroled me, and assigned me a $CAMH peer worker.

Then, my $CAMH peer worker got me HOOKED! My life was TRANSFORMED!!!

Suddenlly, I had it all again – and MORE! The junkies on my street were my FRIENDS, my worker got me a room in a this wonderful new building full of things just like me, and I got a JOB dealing DRUGS!

I still remember my first SCORE, right after the divorce and we had to sell the house! It was even better than getting my own parkette....

I still steal, but not just tips any more. I've graduated to electronics, and jewelry. It's still just for kicks though, and I donate a percentage of the take to Transforming Lives.

Till recently, the one thing missing was RESEARCH, but the forensics department has taken an interest in my story, and asked me to participate in a shop-lifting simulation, featuring a fully-stocked life-sizes replica of THE BAY. Of cours, I said YES!!!

And to think I owe it all to $CAMH! They recognized my natural talent for CRIME, and encouraged me to develop it to our mutual advantage. Who knows, maybe next I'll try pimping! Extortion! Money laundering! Because no matter how much you milked the system before, you can always milk it more after retirement!

Prisoner 71234 (Cell Block D)

Founder, CEO, Junkie, and THIEF!

At the conclusion of the piece, Dr. Praetorius duly rose and congratulated the artiste.

Wow, Prisoner 71234! You're really going places. You'll be on AMERICA's MOST WANTED any day now! I can hardly wait to retire and go on my own CRIME SPREE, only I'm having so much fun SCAMMING, I don't want it to ever end!!!

Some of your SKILLS sure would come in handy. Especially the money laundering for $CAMH in Columbia. After WORLD Mental Hell DAY, we made a lot of contacts for our ADDICTIONS wing.

$CAMH Afghanistan promises to be an especially reliable and lucrative supplier, without compromising the quality our clients have come to depend on, and expect.

We remain totally opposed to smoking, espeically as clients increasingly resort to cheap contraband from which we don't get a percentage. Smoking of contraband cigarettes remains the greatest threat to our drug cartel. Unless our clients are ours in name only, this practice of purchasing non-$CAMH contraband can NEVER be sanctioned!!!

I'm pleased to report that our VIRTUAL VEGAS gambling simulation facility has been an unprecedented success. We even get HATE MAIL from the SANDS!!!

Such sore losers should GET OUT OF THE GAMBLING BUSINESS! If they don't like the competition, they can open up their own HOSPITAL!!!

Meanwhile, I think opening up the grounds to GAMBLING, and calling it RESEARCH, was a stroke of genius.

The CHIEF SCIENTIST AND CROUPIER was hired straight from MONTE CARLO to run our WORLD-CLASS THERAPEUTIC CASINO and he understands better than anyone that THE HOUSE ALWAYS WINS!

With all this dough rolling in from ADDICTIONS and GAMBLING, we hardly need Mental Hell any more!

*****

Dr. Charlie B. Fincks, first president of the Mental Board, founder of the Mental Hygiene Movement, emerged from cryogenic suspension. His beautiful eyelashes rapidly fluttered as he raised his great hairy pioneering forearms and with his bare hands tore off the lid of his freezer in the Mental Board Archives.

He pulled all six and one half athletic feet of himself erect and smashed an elegantly Dix-shod heel into the effigy of the new Asylum that the head chef had sculpted out of icing sugar and food coloring for the big 666 bash and deposited with him for posterity. What a desecration! Now for some ECT.

He left a trail of sugary heelprints all the way to the switchboard.

The receptionist was knitting. She noted the 1930s-style tuxedo as he bent toward her wicket. She knew a shrink when she saw one. She attributed his obsolete attire to the Salvation Army. Cheap bastards. Never got anything good. What the fuck did he want anyway?

The Mental Hygiene of the Future, he said.

She told him to use the pay phone.

*****

Porko's life....

A near-death experience....

Thing Street Asylum

Recuperating in his Shitty Home Apartment, he experienced Fake Memory Syndrome. He had visions! He was convinced! Just give him a few minutes to remember. They were all coming back. Soon he'd be up there in the Dadanian Pantheon with other fucked prophets like Norrie Freed.

Fuckin' big Egyptoid pyramids. Fat pussy-cats. 0, you cute little pussy face, he muttered to himself, seeing them in his vision, falling slowly through space and landing on their feet. He only hoped his deodorant wouldn't poof out. Where would he get tinactin in this desert? You couldn't get a glass of water....

Eyes hovering over the No Fly Zone. Reminding him of that Masonic stuff his uncle had. Or was it the Orange Lodge? Good King Billy rode up on a camel....

Cecil B. DeMille parted the Red Sea with a permit from the Egytpian Ministry of Culture and Antiquities. Signed by Naguib Mafouz....

The loyal brothers of the Dadanian Union of Public Employees toiled under the hot sun. It beat down on them like a jazz tambourine. Um Kaboom's legendary voice rose like a filmscore behind them. She paused to clear her throat. She lit a cigarette, reached for a chocolate. With an intricate system of pulleys and weights they lowered into the facade of the marble pile a granite plinth bearing a mysterious legend: Shitty Home Apartments.

A smashing thunder-clap.

*****

A scene from Revenge of the Sphincter. King Tut's Tomb. Where Lord Panky and Deane have stripped to their short-shorts. The tunnel has collapsed behind them. Burying their shovels. Here, says Lord Panky. Use my Rolex. But Deane has a Movado.

*****

A scene from Cavalcade (circa 1933). Lord Freddie and Lady Gertrude Pork-Bowels in the middle of the North Atlantic aboard a great luxury-liner. Lady Gertrude objects to the presence of so many ice-cubes, as big as glaciers.

Ice-cubes belong in drinks, dahling, not the Atlantic Ocean.

Those aren't cubes, dahling; they're bergs.

Owe, relly? Wouldn't it be frightful if we hit one.

Owe, dahling. Not that old Canarder! Ha ha ha!

*****

Cut to a scene from Whatever Happened to Baby Jane. Joan Crawford with her back against the garage wall. Crucified in the high-beams of Jane's Hudson touring car.

Jane behind the wheel. Smokin. Smiling.

Please, Jane; please.

Jane slowly extinguishes her cigarette....

*****

Cut to a scene from Slamby. Slamby, Sr., in the forest with the Mrs. The young account executive with a thriving software company. Leopold Stokowski leads the orchestra in a mickey mouse renditon of the slow movement from Beethoven's pastorale.

Later, his hide still gleaming from his exertions, Slamby takes a post-coital stroll through the Hollywood Hills. The v-shaped patch at his throat resembles nothing so much as the open collar of Bill Gates' polo shirt. That wolf lurking in the bushes has been laid off for ten years.

Twenty years with the Unification Typewriter Co. He was probably never a very good typist. He must have been singularly lacking in resourcefulness and initiative. That would explain the stint in Cuba. That would explain the Kalashnikov.

Slamby, Jr., frisking alongside his old man. Gee, pa. When am I getting a pentium? Gee, pa. When can I go on the net? Suddenly the studio orchestra strikes up a jazz liebestod from Tristan. The wolf recalls the time famine drove him to insert his social security card into the slot of a bank machine. He bares his fangs and aims straight at the fuzzy warm V.

Gee, pa....

*****

Pioneers of Alienation

The entire chorus of La Scala had assembled in the central square of the Temple at Carnak. They sang the final dying bars of Aida. Immenso Tha! Immenso Tha! Over and over. Great billows of incense puffed over the dias in front of the sanctum sanctorum. It was like the smoke signals in Custer's Last Stand. Or those tacky special effects in The Wizard of Ozz. They made Toto bark.

The chorus chanted and the incense puffed and the throng gaped in awe as the high priests dressed up like Carmen Miranda marched in solemn procession up the temple steps and onto the dias. Their chunky heels made heavy weather. Their plackards bore cabalistic sayings. Bananas were their business, etc.

An acolyte parted the heavy veil of the sanctuary exposing the beige surface of Porko's cubicle. The throng gaped even wider. They positively yawned.

*****

The crown of the Rolex on Lord Panky's grossly indecent wrist created a chink in King Tut's Tomb, cursing the brides of the Windsors even unto today ....

*****

The cheesy 30s-style camera pan exposed what everyone already knew lay beneath the slippered feet of the silly pair of fools: S.S. MORONIC....

*****

Jane crushed Joan's delicate legs under her powerful Hudson's merciless white-walled wheels, enslaving herself forever to her hypochondriac sibling.....

*****

Slamby's beautiful throat exploded between the bloody jaws of unemployable Luddite wolves, who had forgotten all about the kid, and that it was a family show....

*****

The high priest raised his dagger and sliced through the Styrofoam office partition like margarine, revealing the inevitable Porko, back turned to the audience, bald head decorated with a few wispy hairs, bobbing up and down like a stubby penis in a bush. He was typing on a Commodore 64.

C.O.N.S.T.A.N.....

He slowly swiveled around and spake: O, maybe I should just quit.

Thing Street Asylum

Pioneers of Alienation

Pioneers of Alienation:
Part III: Thing Street Asylum

Returning to Thing Street aboard the mephitic fiery-red Rocket....

Uneasy stirring of lunatic passengers....

Noticing all too familiar re-admission signs....

Tall smokestacks of Thing Street Asylum spewing invisible psychotoxins into the atmosphere. Pock-marked walls lovingly erected by patients' own devoted hands. Periodically reconstructed at irregular intervals to mark the ever-shrinking dimensions of the asylum's amorphous farm. Till Funnyside became a PHARM A.C.(D.C.), a VIRTUAL NARCO-ASYLUM, THING STREET, finally the GLOW-BALL PORK-DALE, its collective unconsciousness that poor lonely bagwoman's fucked-up BRAIN as they RUN HER OVER right NOW!

There she flies, into the gutter....

An idiot....

A bag lady....

The 25 Cent Woman....

Alapaloozah's MOTHER!!!

No walls of brick and mortar would ever be large or small enough, that is NON-POROUS enough again, with the ironic result that no one would ever be free again either, but those ancient and venerable walls would remain a cogent reminder of the tremendous progress of psychiatric medicine from loco physical to universal virtual confinement....

Only slightly less monumental were the massive pylons of Doc Workman's aesthetically-pleasing steam-age railroad trestle. Halogen lamps eerily illuminated steep rocky cliff-sides of sepulchral masonry....

Suddenly, a mighty Sowestole-bound express train, bearing that world class sociologist and mental meta-historian, Max the Butcher....

To his Windsor headquarters....

To merge the forces of psychiatric survival with Bozo the Clown and Bill Kennedy at the Fourth International of GLOBAL LUNACY, sponsored by radio station CKLW....

He was Lenin traveling incognito to Finland Station....

He was a SURVIVOR....

He got a complementary FREE BEVERAGE....

Diabolically tuned to the same frequency as the seismic effect of Max's sealed train thundering overhead the entire super-structure oscillated insanely loosening from the scaffolding the fossilized monstrously misshapen cadavers of WHITE SQUIRRELS mutated into pterodactyls on the diet of Thorazine and Lorazepam the inmates tenderly fed them by hand against the rules!

Bodies thudded onto the roadbed on either side of the tracks. Heavy tattered plumes sparked and hissed as wings caught in power lines and tore from rotting shoulder sockets....

The atmosphere filled with the choking stench....

Meanwhile, in his first-class railway carriage, Max the Butcher simpered as he nursed his delicious latte....

Knowing what havoc he was causing his long-suffering things below would not have detracted from his pleasure.... Quite the opposite....

Subliminally he was aware.... Secretly he knew.... He was inflicting great pain....

Hurting others kept him going.... Brought out a smile....

He was passive-aggressive....

Then Johnny recognized his arch-enemy, fruit of cock-sucking Doc Dildo Wingnut's horse-crap Literature as Morality program at Montage U, a pear-shaped fruit himself, (now doctor) Babyface (Fat Louis) Marjoram, his 60s' style Luv-Lox turned saintly-white, his tits dangling like soft over-ripe bananas under his greasy-black Iron Maiden T-shirt.

His fat ass spread amoebically over the slippery vinyl of The Rocket. It stank of stale piss, shit, and ciggies....

Yum-meeeeeeee....

Babyface noticed Johnny.... Just like in the movies, only it made Johnny puke....

Babyface.... Who told Johnny's Nazi thug boss at Lethe Bridge U that Johnny had AIDS.... Who wrote the letter with the very same chubby ciggy-stained fingers with which he was just now picking scabby dried egg yokes out of his beard....

Babyface didn't know that Johnny knew about his treason.... So he smiled at him sexually/fetchingly (Babyface thought).... Anything to get closer, because those pinkies did worse things than wield poison-pens....

Babyface Marjoram was Professor Doctor Dildo Wingnut's adopted son, his spiritual heir.... Dildo loved him lke his own shit.... He was his own shit.... He gave Babyface Johnny's address.... Doc Dildo updated it regularly....

Doc Dildo secretly preferred those Penetrator novels with the gory covers....

Reading about gangsters (almost) made him HARD....

Johnny's fellow passengers painfully adjusted their cerements and farted. Home, sweet home....

Fuck, thought Johnny. I should have stayed in Montreal....

Thing Street Asylum

If only it wasn't STILL DADANIA....

There was something in the water. The massive Rubber Werke had been just up the road, behind the Irish remittance man's Big House. Over the decades the mansion had been a convent and an asylum for unwed motherfucks, but the Rubber Werke continued much as before only diversifying its product somewhat with the times. It manufactured hot-soled fruit boots for sweaty teenagers swinging to the Dorsey Brothers and later on rocking to Jerry Lewis, even sweatier. And, of course, it manufactured scumbags, pioneering the earliest latex models in the 1920s. All the while polluting the water table with the carcinogenic and mind-altering derivatives of its processes. Literally a waste of skin.

It lived on after the butt-ugly Rubber Lodge Apartments Complex replaced it on what most inmates had already come to recognize as accursed ground. The whole neighbourhood was that, land stolen from the Indians by unscrupulous 19th-century realtors for rooming houses for outpatients of the Lunatic Asylum they'd also stolen. The Jews running Rubber Lodge jerry-rigged the plumbing so the pollutants in the water-table seeped into the taps, and the Rubber Werke lived on in the disordered brains of the tenants. Johnny heard the explosion that shattered the pastoral stupor of a late summer Porkdale afternoon, a Rubber Lodge meth lab igniting. It was really the Rubber Werke, at it again, and the curse....

Other days, other developers. Now they were gentrifying even the Rubber Lodge. Where, or where, were poor folks to live if not at the Rubber Lodge? The curse was still operative, it would never stop, the halflife of the neurotoxins was aeons. Now they would infect better stock, bring hereditary taint and race suicide to the hipster class.

Johnny's class had already suicided. He figured most of his neighbours had died already, poisoned by the Rubber. What remained were ghosts of humanity, senile dements. Banshees in wheelchairs, on motorized scooters. Mechanized gorilla bandits. During the intermittent pandemics that characterized modern life, they still congregated in the lobby. Maybe they'd already had The Plague, and had acquired herd immunity. Maybe they'd even died of it, or mutated into something else. He did his best to avoid them, by masking up and leaving by a side exit. They should go to Walmart. Didn't Walmart always need greeters?

His immediate neighbour was useless against the Kremlin-like machinations of management. First, she would tell the Tenant Services Commissar that he said she was a Nazi bitch, a concentration camp commandant, a waste of skin on her own lampshade. Then, if he was ever stupid enough to use her as a witness to the criminal activity that characterized life at the Rubber Factory, she'd immediately lose all credibility by raving how the staff broke into her unit at night for the sole purpose of scratching her walker. During the Great Plague she wore goggles like the Red Baron and a highwayman's mask when she went out with her walker to feed the pigeons. She said it was all up to God, but God was inclined to punish the Chinese for eating bats. What about eating pigeons? He wanted to know. Millions of Italians could be stricken at any moment. A mysterious wasting disease in Little Italy.

*****

Looking east on Thing Street was like looking at happiness through the wrong end of a cheap-shit Tasco telescope that you could buy at Mulhern's Toy Store for $2.95. What a rip....

Everything good looked farther away than ever....

The black towers of the P/BIGGE BANKS where Porko used to work.... The way nothing worked in Dadania, he wasn't even a statistic.... Just a number....

They didn't count unemployed bums in the unemployment stats.... Just the ones that still had enough (2 loonies loco currency) for a subway ride from The Better Way To Hell Transit Commission to actively look for some kinda shit-job in the kinda gentler society....

Porko usually had no more than 30 cents, three coupons for free coffee from the Coffee Slime and, if things were looking up, a day-pass from (paranoid/schizophrenic) Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre.... If she wasn't late because she was fucking a new boyfriend, or dead because he squeezed her neck too tight last time....

Porko wore the same kind of low gray sneaker every day.... Later in their relationship Johnny felt sorry for him about that but he said he had three pairs from his years in the P/BIGGE BANKS.... Now he had an entire wardrobe of expensive G.A.S.P. clothes that he got at J. Zeus Murphy's Zombie Crypt Store for next to nothing....

From his pretty pastel-colored sports-shirt down to his boxer-shorts and socks, Porko was all G.A.S.P....

G.A.S.P. clothes were made in the United States.... Porko bought American.... He hated Dadania and all its works..... Not that Dadanians made anything except each other.... Porko was a total snob, just like his mommy dearest Joan Crawford II.... He believed in brand names....

Unfortunately, he was totally feckless and irresponsible.... There were those brats from the elusive and enigmatic Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre and Alapaloozah and the Teamsters.... He doted on them and called them his babies.... He owed them money....

They got kicked out of their heavily-mortgaged mansion in New Berlin.... Where their neighbours were all failed porn stars with the Milquetoast Broadcasting Company.... Anne of the Stables.... Trixie Zane.... The movers carted off their still unpaid-for things....

Pioneers of Alienation

To Johnny's Thing Store....

*****

Porko couldn't see that he was DESTITUTE.... He thought he was in New Berlin with a bunch of Milquetoast Broadcasting Company swells.... Losers and has-beens for neighbours....

He heard VOICES..... Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre, nattering before breakfast....

She saw Anne of the Stables, fucking her jockey.... Beside their four-BMW garage....

Porko didn't even have a car.... Just a shed he used to put the ponies in.... On Donut Girl's birthday....

Last year he rented his Little Sweetheart a brace of white ponies and hired a black kid from Thing Street to be groom.... Little Donut Girl pretended she was Bette Davis in Jezebel....

Then they inadvertently invited a black girlfriend named Asphalt to Donut Girl's party....

Asphalt straightened out that silly little white bitch, right away.... Porko himself was utterly hopeless..... He called the police.... They took Asphalt back to Thing Street in an armored cop-car.....

*****

Porko believed he was standing beside his (schizophrenic?) other.... Sahib Full City coffees in hand.... The sun was shining..... The birdies were singing.... They floated together through the stately colonnaded American Colonial veranda into their cavernous New Berlin mansion.....

Porko clucked his tongue effeminately (Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre didn't call him Chicken Dumpling for nothing) as instead of the beaming sun he saw a thick opaque film of what appeared to be several weeks' accumulation of bird-shit....

Drat those budgies, he swore..... Then LANGUAGE! he mentally reminded himself, thanking his lucky stars the Porko Babies weren't anywhere near....

Alone in a two-room flat on the ground floor of a stinking Thing Street psychome....

*****

Johnny'd worked in the P/BIGGE BANKS himself, before he fucked up by returning to school in Montreal, associating with that world-class liberal humanist no-account boy-fucker, that absolute shit Dildo Wingnut, his thesis advisor in 18th-Century Lit at Montage U....

Johnny knew 18th-Century Lit was written by closet homos.... Secret-masturbators....

Why split hairs?

They were self-polluting misogynists, who never had a date let alone a passionate physical relationship....

Pope Swift Burke Collins Akenside....

The women were no better.... They bumped pussy from Aphra Behn to Sappho....

Johnny figured he'd be right at home....

He went into debt for a Ph.D. from the WORST ENGLISH DEPARTMENT IN THE WORLD!

His Ph.D. was old flaccid dick that never got it up, not even once.... Dick attached by rotten gristle to a middle-aged fuck's prostate tumescent as a billiard ball....

Dildo Wingnut's....

A thousand perfect facsimile Ph.D.s were being carefully typed out right now in CAPS on Dean Balzac's portable Underwood by his devoted secretary-debauchee, Dame Edith Piaf-Simard. May her snatch be foxy-wild forever. If they had been drinking, or the card-table shook in the motel-room they rented in Cotes des Neiges, the letters were a little blurry....

Ph.D.s don't come easy....

They served many a willing catamite as at once a meal and a train ticket to one of the thousand crappy glorified bible-schools that pimpled the Da-Minion [sic] like acne on hairy wet balls....

Just thinking about it made your typical English Grad itch and scratch and come all over....

Dildo was so LOUSY....

Johnny never figured his first bun was the left buttock of Dunton Depot, the Aryan Nation's top man at Lethe Bridge U....

Those spots weren't poppy-seeds....

The English Department wasn't exactly Plato's Academy, either....

A serialized Visconti costume-drama on the last days in the Fuhrer Bunker....

The musical dance-hall version of Salo, spiced up for middle-aged ex-military Japanese businessmen used to boozing and fucking in Beijing Karaoke bars....

Thing Street Asylum

Trixie drew swastikas on her cubicle.... First Lady of the Aryan Nation but everyone knew she was a whore....

Dunton Depot embezzled the indigent native scholarship money at private drinking parties shoving crack up the ass of his good buddy, that lion of 18th-Century Post-Colonial Faglit, Benedict Oswald....

Oswald made a career out of political correction.... He turned his East Indian wife into a galley-slave breeder while he fucked rich white student bitches at the Cow Poke Inn....

Johnny hated to think what happened to the small animals down in the coulee, coulee so low....

Some of them were students....

He got a pretty good idea after that goose-stepper Depot sent him the newspaper clippings about Walter Benjamin's suicide....

Cheers! the fucker said....

Meaning, fuck off'n die, Jewboy....

Only he wasn't dead yet, Dunton....

He could still T.Y.P.E....

Try it along with me....

*****

Johnny never dreamed he'd look back on his days as a wage-slave in the P/BIGGE BANKS as an idyll of happiness....

They were, compared to what came after....

Lethe Bridge U and Dunton Depot and a lot worse mother-fucks than DILDO Wingnut made it all possible....

Like Dildo's sweet fuck-buddy RUBE GOLDBERG and his stinking apprentice BABYFACE MARJORAM....

The hate-mail, the doors slammed in his face by things who'd never even met him but knew all about him, at least the nasty rumors....

There were a few....

Johnny thought of the giant falling sky-scrapers he'd seen on his tiny black-and-white TV screen....

They crushed him whether he worked in them or not.... They asphyxiated him with their dusty stinking smoke.... The exhaust from their street-level ventilators was Auschwitz mustard gas to Johnny.... They belonged to Richard Lion-Heart and Vlad the Impaler.... Toting alligator portfolio cases.... Holding bloody silk hankees in front of their jowly kissers.... Coughing blood.... Other things' blood.... Johnny was their serf their victim their little fly helplessly sucked by the air-conditioning into Renfield the Zoophagite's mail-room.... Along with dozens of dead birds diseased rats and a dead baby belonging to Trixie Zane....

Just another statistic....

Buried in the soon-to-be rubble of WORST DADANIAN BORGIA PALACE and the P/BIGGE BANKS....

Johnny struggled in their post modernist shadow, on the wrong side of the commuter-tracks and Doc Workman's infamous aesthetically-pleasing high-Victorian railroad-trestle....

It was already pomo in 1880....

Uglier than Lethe Bridge....

The punks draped enormous wanking red swastikas over the iron railings onto the streetcar tracks.... When a streetcar came full of impatient fucks....

The locos protested with 60s-style peace-marches, beating tom-toms threatening to expel the Nazi Shrinks.... From their fair quarter....

Johnny thought they should be forced to stay....

From the good end of Thing Street, high atop their marble urinals, with the assistance of telephoto cameras, satellites and other expensive voyeuristic devices, dirty capitalist swine observed their antic rutting and scrounging, and laughed so hard they came.....

*****

P/Bigge Shitte dreamed them. Pinching one, it came to her.

Thing Street!

She created a world for Johnny, et al.

For FUN....

They thought air pollution, but it was indigestion. Something she ate with Crazy, in a latte joint for hags. With marble-topped tables and slowly revolving ceiling fans.

Pioneers of Alienation

CRACKERS announced BAD AIR DAY on his MBC talk show, relayed by every station of the broadcasting system, covering the Dah-Minion, like a hairnet

He told everybody it was their DIAMOND JUBILEE. Fifty years an ITEM.

It seemed longer than that to Johnny. Even longer that P/Bigge Shitte had been an item by herself.

He remembered sitting in the magazine section of the tiny library of his small home town.

He'd find P/Bigge Shitte in magazines named after food-stuffs and raw materials: FUR, THE BEAVER PELT, WHEAT, etc.

He couldn't miss her. Big hair, clutch purse full of weed, granny glasses....

His first publication had been in WHEAT. Half the issue had been devoted to P/Bigge Shitte.

P/Bigge Shitte put them through their motions. Their contortions made her giggle. Lilliputians! They took everything seriously, and it was all in her head.

She couldn't contain herself, they were so funny. She contained them, however.

She jigged up and down.

She was a bit of a contortionist, herself.

She was gross. She thought she was a busker, dancing in the street with hippies but she had a bad case of what they used to call General Paralysis of the Insane.

She was a PARETIC, a SYPH in other words. Just another dirty, old SYPH. Weren't they always dirty, old?

It took decades for spyrochetes to eat their way up her spine into her brain and EAT some of it, too.

Bon appetite, my DARLINGS!

Her accolytes thought they detected a slight improvement in her fiction....

She would have made an excellent QUEEN, or ASYLUM GREETER – welcoming eco-tourists and strolling JANE'S WALKERS to THING STREET, showcasing DADANIAN SOCIAL PROGRAMS, $CAMH, TRANSFORMING WIVES, etc.

She was already unofficial ASYLUM GREETER for the ENTIRE COUNTRY, which was really just a big mental hospital anway....

Look up anything and she'd pop up, to tell you about Dadania's record-high literacy rates (her book sales), free speech (her creatures saying nice things about her, how she still gave GREAT HEAD, etc.), human rights (she got rich, didn't she?)....

Suddenly, she stopped. No sense overdoing it, she gasped. If she croaked she'd realize Johnny's dream, of....

Survival!

Surviving HER, that is!

She would hate being dead, helpless to do anything about it.

She hoped if she WERE she wouldn't be painfully aware that her condition was not only extremely galling to herself but almost unbearably agreeable.... to Johnny!

She hoped! She prayed there wasn't an afterlife....

Certainly not if it meant pleasuring.... Johnny!

Better no HEAVEN than that HELL!

Overjoyed as he'd be at her demise, he'd be even happier knowing that it wasn't total, that she was just sufficiently conscious, that in the Mausoleum built for her carcass with the proceeds from her Poetry Foundation, she felt his triumph, she knew he knew she knew....

Pigge Shitte imagined the heat coming on in Johnny's Thing Street Asylum.

Did they really have HEAT, in the Porkdale of Pigge Shitte's imagination?

Just barely!

Steam, or electric?

Steam! Hydro was too expensive, and modern.

She saw the antique radiators from Johnny's Welfare Hotel reinstalled in the renovated Chicken Coop she called home, financed with prize money from the Milquetoast Young Writers Contest she won seventy years running.

After acing Awards Night yet again she confided to Johnny's slumlord, the media mogul Citizen Hearse, that she dreamed of replacing Johnny's rads with bare, uninsulated copper tubing in cheap aluminum housings with metal fin's that creaked, the first and only indication that.... THE HEAT WAS ON!

The Hearse said, consider it done.

Thing Street Asylum

So Pigge Shitte glowed pink from the heat of Johnny's old radiators, while Johnny turned blue beneath his tattered Godwill baby blanket. She made him long for his apartment as he never knew it, before her dream made it his nightmare.

Resistance was largely, but not entirely.... FUTILE!

Johnny wanted to wrap up one of those enormous bowling trophies he was always finding for $.50 at Worthless World and mail it to her, a FAKE Nobel Prize.

She could practise shoving it....

Up her ass, for all he cared.

He CARED....

Once she made Johnny toss and turn fitfully half the night, part the torn draperies that failed to cut the glare from the street lamp right outside his bedroom window, and peer out the rain-spattered window at the flashing lights of the ambulance she'd parked at his front door on Thing Street.

She made the attendants beat it, so there was no one around. The ambulance just waited there, like the attendants were inside the Welfare Aylum, and it was taking them a long time to stabilize their client.

P/Bigger Shitte bit the nail off her little pinky, wondering what to dream next.

So she added a couple of cops, who arrived in their cruiser with the lights flashing. She wanted to create a hint of foul play, or substance abuse. She and Crackers occasionally smoked dope, or did a line of coke together.

Illegal drugs!

She gave Trixie attributes guaranteed to nauseate Johnny. She made her short and bony, with bad veins like an inveterate IV user, and a pasty complexion like she never paid any attention to diet except when the drugs made her hungry and she binged on Doritos (c) and Coke (c).

She gave her long, oily-black hair that glimmered under the streetlights like wet squirrel fur and dressed her in jeans, T-shirt, and baby-sized sneakers that appealed to Porko's little girl fetish.

Johnny watched disgusted as Trixie did what she called taking control of the situation, butting in and making a nuisance of herself by leaping into the rear of the ambulance behind the startled tenant on his stretcher, tripping over his catheters and all the other hardware that had been keeping him just barely alive....

Johnny wanted to call out to the handsome ambulance men, and the beefy cops.

What are you waiting for? You got her, take her. We been wanting to get rid of this slut for years. Now's the chance, the opportunity we been waiting for. At least take her in, for an assessment.

At Joe's Garage!

They know how to treat you nice....

But P/Bigge Shitte wouldn't let him, because it wasn't his dream. It was his NIGHTMARE!

So she made him get up and watch Trixie's whole nauseating spectacle as Porko joined her curbside. Almost as if they were married....

Pigge Shitte organized her whole career around her notion of survival, which she cunningly identified with the nation's.

From notion to nation was no giant leap for P/Bigge Shitte....

The last subatomic particle of Johnny's individuality was the wish to survive Pigge Shitte. They were imperfectly matched contemporaries, though who was whose remained to be seen.

She became a disciple of The Great Freed, though it was she who proselytized him.

Of his jerry-built theo-cosmo-logical system, she became fulfilment, anti-type, and Messiah.

It was magic, quackery but she renewed it with energy, with passionate conviction born of self-love and.... NARCISSISTIC PERSONALITY DISORDER!

She revitalized waning institutions, transforming them into acolytes of her cult of personality, her charisma: The MBC, the Can-D Council, Parnassus Ink, The Boomers' Golden-Age Bookstore Mint, The Dadanian Canon, The Reading Lists of the University of Montage, The Book Reviews of Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre....

All fueled the votive fire at the shrine of P/Bigge Shitte.

The digital era was a boon for her, a bonanza. It was everywhere, and it was nothing. Just like her. She was ubiquitous.

Any other medium would have exposed her essential nothingness, but there was no such risk, no such opportunity in....

The NEW AGE!

Pioneers of Alienation

Every time he heard her droning her latest fiction he heard saws whining and trees crashing, lumberjacks swearing small animals scolding running for cover, etc.

Maybe GUILT made her want to save everything, especially trees.

Nobody wasted more trees than P/Bigge Shitte.

She wanted to convert all the woods to paper for her shit.... the PIG! Whole forests had been flattened, boiled, and printed with her name on them.... P/Bigge Shitte Allwood!

Well, like FRANKIE used to sing....

It was better than digging post-holes, for the IRON or BAMBOO CURTAIN!

Or lace-curtain IRISH, too!

P/Bigge Shitte lived in terror of imminent arrest for raping the arboreal forest, but she said she was just trying to save it.

Cordon sanitaire, etc....

GROUND ZERO, more likely!

Her hysterical response to perceived repression by Alapaloozah's terror apparatus of civil and every other kind of disobedience was really guilt at what she'd done herself.

To the trees.... To the white squirrels....

Poor little baby white squirrel bastards!

She defied Grand Vizier Alapaloozah to bugger her scrawny tight ass, because secretly she knew....

She deserved it!

She typed messages exhorting her followers to throw themselves in the way of oncoming logging crews, and posted the messages on line, mistmaking typing for civil disobedience, grievously disturbing to Alapaloozah and his cringing Janissaries, who nervously hung on her every word, when really they would at most have been amused to know she wasn't dead yet.

But basically couldn't give a FUCK!

Even assuming they were listening when she challenged the regime to jail her immediately, to THROW HER IN THE SLAMMER, as she put it, demonstrating her grassroots knowledge of SLANG, she was confident it could never happen to her....

Because....

She was.... P/Bigge Shitte!

She WANTED it!

*****

Inescapable black bastions....

Or were they?

If Johnny couldn't escape them in reality, he would GET RID OF REALITY....

The residents of Thing Street were really inmates of a stupendous open-air Virtual Asylum....

It was more than their right, it was their DUTY to be delusional, to put on a really BIG SHOW with plenty of straw and, above all, FECES.

The THING STREET BETTER BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION demanded it; otherwise, gangs of slumming matrons from New Berlin got bored, came down to Thing Street, and spoiled the TRADE by boycotting the Thing Stores and cut-rate job-ends and only wanting to FUCK....

The other reason was LOONIES like JOHNNY....

The tourists enjoyed triggering his PSYCHOSES....

They offered him only twice what his shit was worth.... He wanted at least ten or twenty times that much.... More and more and more....

In the BAD OLD DAYS, before that fake Tuke came along with moral therapy, he would have daubed the walls of his cell with his own and other things' crap, drunk piss, emptied the dregs of his chamber-pot in their faces, etc....

That Grand Ole Nestor of Dadanian Alienists Head Shrink Doc Joseph Workman's Provincial Lunatic Bin was ugly enough....

Thing Street Asylum

Those yuppies' pink elephant-sized condos with the melanoma sun-deck widows'-walks right under the walls of the Forensic Ward for Unpredictable Serial-Killers were a lot worse....

But the raveling pennants and bilious screaming brat-laden ferris-wheels and merry-go-rounds of the Dadanian National Winter Clown-Show Circus starring none other than Bozo Himself.... Right where FUNNYSIDE FARM used to be.... Right in the middle of the PSYCHOTROPIC GARDENS.... Beside the abandoned warehouses of the MASSIVE FAMILY TRACTOR WORKS.... That really was TOO fucking much....

The minarets.... The whirligigs.... The hoop-la carny barkers.... The greatest quack charlatan mountebank medicine-man of all time.... Doc Workman.... Working the crowd.... Secret masturbators.... Self-polluters.... Pitching Mental Hell.... Quick relief.... He'd make a swell take here on Thing Street....

Even if nobody cared about sanity....

*****

It was a cross between (that fake) Quaker Tuke's moral therapy and Barnum and Bailey....

Bozo's Bald Top Asylum Clown Show....

The circus was always in town....

On Thing Street....

The kiddies in strollers, or trotting beside their mommas.... Off to the matinée.... To see the clowns....

Nursing pails of butts.... Scouring the boulevards.... Picking garbage.... Sleeping in doorways.... Littering store-fronts.... Scaring off customers....

Making legends.... Making history.... How this one used to be a high-school teacher.... That one, even a PROFESSOR....

Then he ran away from sanity.... Eloped, and Joined the circus.... Became a figment.... A big attraction.... A cerebral event.... In Bozo's Bald Top.... Asylum Clown-Show....

Perenially fascinating to kiddies everywhere.... Bozo's (febrile) Bald Top Asylum....

His diseased imagination....

Impossible to tell them apart.... The kiddies' and Bozo's.... Delusions.... Too hard to call....

It was really all.... An entirely SICK DREAM.... Nightmare.... Worthy of Bozo's shaved head.... A stump lot.... Beside lousy housing projects.... Teeming.... Buggy.... Like a counter-top in a roach-infested kitchen....

His tonsured monastical crown....

*****

Hear Ye! Hear Ye!

Nearly all the psychiatric buffoonery of the Da-Minion is perpetrated at Bozo's Thing Street Sharke Tank C-World Bald-Top Asylum Clown-Show....

Conveniently located right beside the Mighty U of Titz, The Sharke Tank (as alternately styled by fond alumni) trains shrinks for the Da-Minion.

Thousands upon thousands of clients and kin have been TRANSFORMED, not only those whose lives were directly permanently fucked, but anyone who ever got near the place....

All have been benighted by the towering clouds of ignorance that The Institute has generated since its foundation on the anniversary of the centenary of the Da-Minion and the assassination of Julius Caesar, when Dr. Praetorius succeeded Glorious Physician Aldwyn Julie-Baby Stokes as Departmental Chairman, Head Shrink, Maitre d', and Ring-Master-in-Chief at The Sharke Tank....

Shrink culture in the teaching hospitals of Hogtown was entirely stolen from the British Maudsley Circus with its emphasis on phenomenology and sword-swallowing. Doc Praetorius, a fire-eater from Panama University, introduced his new mind reading act... With his beautiful new assistant, Trixie Zane....

He always figured Julie-Baby wouldn't make it.... Looking over his shoulder.... Biting his nails.... Going to the bathroom when he didn't have to pee....

Suddenly he wasn't there anymore....

But there was this stain on the carpet....

We hadn't seen anything like it, since talkies came in... Or the invention of television, when they shut down half the cinemas.... Or sound, when they closed the Vaudeville Houses.... It was a palace revolt, in a movie palace.... Anschluss.... The Bijoux Dream....

All the old Vaudevillians from Hogtown Shrink suddenly found themselves on their uppers.... Clarence Bagman Farout pawned his golden pince nez....

Praetorius was a macho stud.... A man's man.... Combining typically Dadanian kind-caringness with the sharp instincts of a riverboat gambler on the Amazon....

It was rumoured his ancestors had slaves....

Pioneers of Alienation

He said this was one hick town for sure.... The new mind reading act would probably bomb.... Everything was Maudsley Circus.... Maudsley Circus.... They were stuck on Charlie Chaplin.... Buster Keaton.... C.B. “Bagman” Farout was considered hot....

It was clear from the beginning that we were expected to be good little vaudevillians, not clinically-trained method actors who'd read their Stanislavski.... Our worst fears were confirmed when, making our Really Big Rounds, all we heard was requests for old Maudsley routines....

They said psychotherapy wasn't funny....

It was all TALK TALK TALK....

At the staff lunch table we were having a clinical consultation and they threw a shepherd's pie right in my kisser....

They thought THAT was funny....

That was something The Bagman would do....

The new mind reading act was a HIT....

Since the 60s things have gone swimmingly in The Sharke Tank....

Through a decade of social upheaval and political foment we have PIONEERED a new genre of tragi-comic meta-farce....

We have a complete line of videos, featuring thousands of disoriented post-psychotic liberals, disaffected homosexuals, and alienated academics arrested attempting to flee the Satrapy of Dadania, for THE PROMISED LAND, the U.S.A....[38]

We have confiscated alcohol, hallucinogens, and amphetamines....

Drugs, drugs, drugs....

And SEX....

Three wide-open general adult units teeming with 30 burning beds apiece....

The bomb-shell receptionist greets you in the lounge, with a smile like a Commodore keyboard....

All-day room-service featuring a smorgasboard of community treatment orders served piping hot from individual holding kitchens and, for the voyeur, observation-rooms, with one-way mirrors....

This is no provincial lunatic asylum....

This is SHARKE HOTEL!

Beautiful Euro-Mussolini architecture.... Nordic ski-lodge furniture....

But don't think for a moment you're in some ordinary hostel.... Don't think for a moment you're NOT in a MENTAL HOSPITAL.... The joint is positively CRAWLING with nurses.... Orderlies.... Social workers.... Sex Trade Workers.... Shrinks....

There's Professor C. Lamprini Eel right now! Leaning on the bangled arm of (who else?) Trixie Zane....

Moving rather slowly.... Almost as old as Bagman himself....

But really they're both so B.U.T. FULL, if it weren't for their white coats you'd think they were.... Movie Stars!!!

*****

Johnny bought milk at the NEVERCLOSED on Dung and Thing Street. He was afraid to say HOMO, so he got 2%.

The Koreans interrupted their brisk crack and gambling trade to take his dough. He said he didn't need a bag. They hadn't offered him one....

A tall, dark guy loitered beside the door. He was growing a beard. He sported wire-rimmed spectacles, a studded leather biker jacket, and very clean buff-colored work-boots. He was a mod Neanderthal, a throw-back to the 60s....

A private detective, a narc....

Johnny hated him immediately....

Loathing turned to horror when tall, dark and handsome introduced himself by asking Johnny if he lived upstairs.

Why, Johnny demanded to know? He wasn't exactly paranoid, just on the qui vive....

My name is DEANE, the man said.

O, yeah? Johnny kept right on walking....

I just wanted to meet the neighbors. The man followed, apologizing. Johnny was already miles away....

[38] At the end of his career Clarke gives the fourth Maudsley Lecture before the Medico-Psychological Society of Great Britain. The abstract is published as "Mental Hygiene in Canada," Lancet 1 (June, 1923): 1139-41. Now the wholenation is a virtual asylum whose relatively meagre mental health resources render it vulnerable to a plague of European immigration. With its tiny population and its fledgling development, it is remarkable that it has been able to achieve anything at all (1139). Given "the host of immigrants drifting from the old world," more must be done to preserve its vulnerable but virtuous population; otherwise, it will lose its identity, "the rugged qualities which have characterised our people in the past" (1139). Yes, he conceeds, grotequely adapting Kipling's infamous metaphor, "Canada must ... pump in the population," but "it is necessary to put the suction pipe in waters not polluted by defect, physical degeneracy, and social failure" (1139). Canada's greatest hope is not now from Europe, but from "the importation of good Nordic types from the United States" (1139).

Thing Street Asylum

Stoopid fuck. Nobody wanted to meet the neighbors on THING STREET....

Johnny wondered what it was that made lunatics think the whole universe wanted to make their acquaintance. Of course, he suddenly realized, clouds parting, mist clearing, THAT was why....

*****

Deane's swell foot.

Crazier than Grable's ankles.

Sparse hairs sprinkled the metatarsus like ferns. They blew in from the Kennedy compound on Martha's Vineyard, from Jr.'s disaster.

The Fitzgerald breasts of dead Kennedys. JFKs, Sr. and Jr.

Their cells wafted in the current, in the off-shore breeze. Hemorrhaged in the atmosphere. Traumatized the sunset. Their mammary mummy dust.

Jr.'s wounded foot dancing with Sr.'s bone chips body hair life blood jissom, streaming through Jackie's outstretched ethereal fingers. The Greek ghost-freighter signaling off Squibnocket Beach startled pirates, dancing in Tea Lane.

Onassis. Onassis. Onassis.

Naked fleshless feet clicking castanets on ivory ribs raising sequins Spanish medallions doubloons dog-tags and dusky paps of dead sailors' chests.

Deane's foot summered in his sneaker. It got hot. Scorning all things confining as the refinements of modern effeminacy, with a peremptory moist slap like the final fillip of a dying beaver's tale, it flounced from its canvas sheath.

Deane's foot was Dadanian!

Following the Dadanian Army University Recruitment Training Course Exercise, Deane caroused with a few favorites.

After a dozen rounds they put up their feet and, donning the sweetest zirconium tiaras, discussed hairy chicks.

Their pedal camaraderie slowly ripened into life-long fetishism.

Bruce said Deane's foot tasted like Grushenka's. Only saltier. He'd been reading Dostoyevsky, the pervert!

That was when they really let loose one night.

Bruce turned him over and, grabbing his feet like throttles, looped the loop-hole like a pilot on the Birmingham airplane line. They went air-borne.

The slats broke under the impact of their landing.

They did it on the floor.

Boys will be boys.

They were fly-boys.

At a photo-op Deane wore his skimpiest athletic shirt. It accentuated his nipples. A row of identically clad stallions tore off their tank-tops for the shower scene.

Bruce mounted his steed.

The camera panned to the floor. Against a background of sequined T-shirts you could see it, even in the black-and-white year-book photo, in all its glory.

Deane's foot!

*****

All Johnny had to do was call himself Jenna Jameson, or Chevy Chase, wait till Deane followed him on-line, and say, Hi THERE!

He'd wag his tail and lick Johnny's hand, like a little lost Pomeranian.

Johnny tried it.

It worked!

He was queer-bait.

Just to be honest he called himself Chevy Chase the Younger. Then he went on-line and waited till Deane appeared. Either Deane only got the first part or he figured the Younger was close enough. It had to do.

Hi, there Deane said, wagging his tail. My name is Deane! Then he invited Chevy to look at his website. Johnny said sure. Right away.

He immediately realized he shouldn't have, because Deane kept track of everyone who visited his site. He'd find out. Johnny and Chevy were one.

Pioneers of Alienation

He said, hi, there. I'm Johnny, from Thing Street, Hogtown. I'm a Ph.D. Did you know your web-site was full of spelling mistakes?

Well....
Let's see if you can sing this while you spell....

Take your Ph.D. and teach somebody else.
You can't even write a good sentence.
Fuck you, Deane swore.

*****

In the Psycho Pharm A.C./D.C. Dragon Lady taunted Johnny.
She thought she was a pharmacist trained in Singapore. She thought she was a dragon.
She was Jah Lo See, a bum.
Po stoopid honk, she said. Sad you not yellow [pron. yerow]. Dragon Lady [pron. rady etc.] only hire yellow. Go New York. Work restaurant, CHOP CHOP....
Johnny perked up. He always wanted to go to New York.
Everybody think you spy. You won't work for peanuts. Stoopid honk not dumb....
To be in New York, I would work for free. But first I must get there.
Everybody go. You too stoopid know how.
I mean illegally.
Who you think wash dishes, pick grapes if U.S. gringo honks arrest at border? Not so dumb either, honk.
It's true, Johnny agreed, endeavouring to ingratiate himself with his saffron hostess. She was absolutely correct. Cheap immigrant labor fueled the economy, or Bill Gates' yacht sputtered and sank in the Potomac.
Yes, he said. They bitch and whine about illegal aliens.... It's very hypocritical. So was Johnny, but that was another matter....
He hoped The Drag wasn't on to him. But how would he know? Yellows were so inscrutable....
He asked her if she knew of any openings in New York, in Chop Suey Joints?
Nothing for you, honk, she said.
Maybe I could put on your white coat and sell drugs to the LOCOS....
I'd have to buy back my white coat at a POLICE AUCTION....
I don't mean on the street. I mean legally, as a happy business associate of Psycho Farm A C./D.C.
No!
Ah, come on.
Never!
Ever?
Try telemarketing!
I got a Ph.D....
One day I will pick up phone and recognize your voice.... Asking for the lady of the house (pron. rady)....

*****

On the MBC.
Fags arguing which bad movies were the worst.
Each worked for a different rag. The only thing that distinguished them was their CLOTHING.
The one on the right was a tight pink angora sweater. The one in the middle was a pair of black half-glasses. The one on the left in a red leather jacket and a pair of ear-rings, was Butch!
Johnny didn't recognize him....

They had something to wear but nothing to say, except that the Oscars were about nothing, which was obvious.
Finally there was a beefy big Germanic-looking business-fuck in a dark 4-piecer, seated among pseudo-classical faux-marble columns, discussing macro-economic prospects with employees of financially interested investment houses and a representative of the U.S. President.
The representative was very sanguine about the president, tax cuts, and the future, assuming he had one.
The business-fuck indicated in coded body-language that he really wanted to extol the beauties of National Socialism.
He goose-stepped out of the studio while the credits rolled.

Thing Street Asylum

*****

On the MBC (Milquetoast Broadcasting Company). Awarding Dandy Council Prizes. Trixie Zane raving that the true measure of civilization was the degree to which it honored literary prize-winning sex-workers (whores) like her.

The U.N. said Dadania was the best place to live in the world. It was for Trixie.

She regarded the stars. They weren't all in heaven.

She whelped the dream.

COMMUNICATOR OF THE YEAR!

Tell it, Songstress.

Poetry, a philosophical consolation, an elegiac Song of the Earth....

Kathleen Ferrier, croaking....

Eurydice, with throat cancer...

Learn the stillness of the forest, if you would run clear....

She was thinking about the wood-cutter's strapping teenage son. Naked, in a vacant stump-lot....

Afterwards, a great sadness....

She said Dadanians set the highest value on freedom of expression, because we had freedom of imagination.

That's why we were so honest, with such wonderfully meaningful, authentic VOICES....

Trixie was raving....

The announcer interrupted to FART. You are listening to the Milquetoast Broadcasting Company. As if he didn't know....

No one cared....

Freud. Deep drives. Frederick Nike and Shoppinghour. Death of certainty. World War I. Civilization a mechanized gorilla bandit. Humanism all shook-up. From anti-humanism to fascism a bobsled ride. Lute Finale.

Nomohomopomopop!

Somehow things just weren't right....

The announcer broke wind again....

Trixie will be right back.

To discuss car bombs with artificial intelligence. Diplomatic immunity. The Ambassador's Gucci's blown out his asshole and nobody blamed for it.

There was EVERY REASON FOR HOPE!

*****

Smell Gasman and his stinkers (Bizz Kukzinksky especially) wanted to change the name of Thing Street to WHITE SQUIRREL WAY in honor of that Great White Fawthuh of Dadanian Shrinkage and Benefactor of Madkind, C.K. [Cold Killuh] Sharke, FRSSS [Fellow of the Royal Society of Shrink Screws].

It would be a REALLY BIG SHOW.

At the climax of the ceremony, Trixie would fellate a larger than life-size cream-filled effigy of Killuh's COCK.

She didn't even know about it yet; she thought she'd been hired on account of her capacity for CARING.

Trixie promised herself that after she joined THE SHARKE there'd be NO MORE BLOW-JOBS, but this was only the first of many compromises she would be forced to make, in pursuit of a career and those CHECKY-WECKS to which she had become accustomed to the point of ADDICTION....

The worst muthus (Professor C. Lamprini Eel, Dr. Praetorius, Charles Waldorf Handy, Citizen Rudolph Hearse, Max the Butcher, Babyface Marjoram, et al.) attended Fawthuh Doctaw C.K. [Cold Killuh] Sharke's apocolocyntosis,

his installation as tutelary guardian of the neighborhood that would ever after bear his name, the way Oscar Wilde's corpse endures Epstein's hideous statue even unto today.

It was at 3. Boomsday....

*****

Miss Pearl was admitted on July 8, 1913, after suffering a nervous breakdown possibly brought on by the strain of NURSING.

Dr. Biggs observed that Miss Pearl's conversation was disconnected and intensely self-centered. A sample was put into the Clinical Record. It was the stream of consciousness of a recent admission, her affect not yet too flattened by Thing Street Asylum to appreciate it:

> This crazy business is not what it is cracked up to be .... some Drs. I know are not peace makers, are no good, I can work peace at home. I can tell a great deal about insanity. I can smell it, and then I work my way out. I think it is Providence that sent me here. If I had not trusted in Providence, I would not have got through the last 3 months .... I want to get busy, so I can take my mind off myself .... I never tie a knot with my tongue that I cannot untie with my teeth. I will hang a shingle out against you Dr., I will not work for less than $10.00 a day. Some things run around here with a handful of keys. I do not know what closed doors mean. It would just kill my father, if he knew I was here. He will be here in a few days. His head is bad enough, without worrying about me. I suppose if I would break down and cry, they would like that. I would sooner take up a chair and smash their brains out. I did not come here to be bossed. Hear that noise? That patient has got to be moved out of the room [patient heard somebody pounding upstairs] .... I want that woman taken away. My head is sore enough now, some poor soul in distress I suppose. When I was in Peterboro I did not have to wait, I know where I am well treated and where I am not. I would not give my little finger for their whole carcass. I think too hard, that is what hurts my head. My brain had a house-cleaning about three months ago. I never had a horse run away from me. I am not so crazy as cabbage looking. When I went to Rockwood, I knew I had found my mission. I could manage the patients better than the rest of them. I only had to get advice from the matron.

Miss Pearl's mocking claim to possess an expertise on insanity to rival the Doctors', is intelligently interspersed with references to the grim reality, the best evidence of their failure.

A different expertise comes from having been insane herself, and from understanding insanity from the patient's perspective: officious things running around with bunches of keys, and still so many unopened doors, so much violent noise unanswered, so much waiting around unattended.

She is aware of the irony that, having recently nursed a sister and a father, to the detriment of her own sanity, she is herself neglected and called upon to nurse, in Thing Street Asylum.

To judge by her observations, she was an observant nurse.

*****

Trixie’s clients were incurables. No point giving her curable ones.

Butch and his friends mattered nothing to Trixie; they couldn't possibly imagine what she did, all night. What did they know, about her DOUBLE LIFE?

About LUSH LIFE?

Praetorius already knew. Her corpses turned up in his morgue....

Lamprini Eel soliloquized them....

She borrowed a copy of Moravagine that Johnny had out on his Titz Card. She entered Johnny's thing store, gossiping about her problems at THE SHARKE TANK, her designated loony rebelling against her imbecile regime, ordering her to beat it, holding the ward at gun point, and finally setting fire to Professor Eel's private penthouse.

Trixie promised to return Johnny's book on Monday, in the store. Monday came, but not Trixie.

That pissed Johnny off.

His Titz Card was his passport to the Land of Spirit. It took loonies for vending machines.

She'd pay, for voiding his Titz Card.

Alas, poor Yorrick....

*****

Thing Street Asylum

Trixie Zane examined Johnny, stuck her fingers as far as they'd go up his ass, said from what she could feel of it (her fingers were short), his prostate was SMALL!

She asked when his last eye examination was. He needed a new prescription. Bifocals! She poked her little flashlight into his mouth. When was his last visit to the dentist? He needed to go again, soon.

Trixie explained. She didn't enjoy going to the doctor. Telling Johnny to go was her job. She got PAID for it....

Whose appointment was this, anyway? Hers, of course.

Trixie confessed she hated doctors too, but she was prepared to make an exception of some cases. Praetorius's! He had such good taste. For junk! She couldn't stop thinking. Those fanbacks!

Trixie returned. To the Blue Questionnaire. She asked Johnny about his concurrent disability. On top of everything else, MENTAL RETARDATION.

He also had trouble sleeping alone. Maybe five or six hours, total. He still dreamed about the Crazy House, only less often. After jerking himself off, he didn't have the stamina! Then he had morning sickness. Otherwise, he felt better, after he got his pension. Getting it was traumatic.

Trixie nodded, sympathetically. If only she knew! How close he came, to exposing her glorified muffler shop.

He posted a video about his hardships. How THE MINISTRY OF STEALTH AND LONG-TERM DESPAIR took twice the legal waiting period, laughed till they came when they decided AGAINST him, then wiped themselves with his application. How he went to consult Trixie at her Muffler Shop, only to be told by the blithe receptionist that Trixie was on extended leave researching Tasmanian fan-backs and wouldn't return till next January, when the deadline for appeal would have passed.

Wasn't it WONDERFUL?

He appealed their decision himself, on grounds of inability to work, unemployment in excess of 30 years (excluding THE CRAZY HOUSE and his SCHIZO CAPTAIN), MENTAL RETARDATION, and EMOTIONAL CRUELY (theirs). He signed as DOCTOR (Montage U, class of 1991).

He withdrew his video a few days later, when THE MINISTRY inscrutably reversed their decision and honored his claim....

He recalled a saying of his thesis advisor at Montage U, Dildo Wingnut, GREAT MAN. It went like this. (AHEM!) He knew where his next hamburg was coming from. Dildo, with a direct feed from Canada Packers....

Trixie assured him. It was a formality, practically automatic. He was old, useless. Checking two more boxes on the Blue Questionnaire. He wondered if they were enough to get him on, FOREVER!

You obviously aren't getting any, she concluded. Checking the final box. But hypothetically? What if he was?

He SWORE, he'd take every precaution.

He aced it. Trixie said she'd draw a sample of his blood, then he could go. That was all. No AIDS test slipped in, without consent. They didn't judge.

Nobody at Thing Street Asylum judged. They asked some junkie punk, was he ever in trouble with the law? Strangely reticent. They assured him, they didn't judge. Yeah, all right. Suddenly confided. He'd been in stir half his life, armed robbery and assault. They didn't judge, but the law was the law. Fucking recidivist.

If they didn't judge, it was because they didn't live here. Thing Street, where judging right meant survival. Judge wrong, you might not. Judge not, you would not.

Only he didn't believe her. Trixie judged after all, all the time. It wasn't that she didn't let on. She didn't even realize (stupid COW).

Poor, recidivist Johnny. Judged so far back, nobody noticed. That judgment like a poison you couldn't taste or smell, which made it not less lethal but more dangerous.

Johnny belonged to Thing Street. Trixie didn't live there, not till recently, and never really. They worked, so they didn't belong. They didn't judge, either. They didn't have to. Judgments had been rendered. By the DEAD. C.K. Sharke, et al....

Trixie just passed sentence. Johnny submitted. To interrogation, examination, and other tests than blood-tests, that would have shocked them....

*****

In a long letter to a friend, written on Christmas Day, Miss Marvel (admitted on October 21, 1919) expressed her indignation and shock at finding herself in Thing Street Asylum.

If it didn't cause insanity, it certainly aggravated it....:

It was the worst sort of place....

After getting here they may have thought me crazy but if anyone here a week without eating & sleeping & placed in dark rooms with mad things singing all around you not knowing they were mad....

I think it only natural to lose your balance as I know I must have one night when I saw angels & lighted cross.

Pioneers of Alienation

Under the circumstances a vision was not merely a delusion, a sign of sickness, but a sign of salvation. Madness was almost natural....

Perhaps after such a drastic transition, it was also natural to provide an explanation. She offered what she called her solutions, reasons for coming to the Asylum. She suspected the doctor of complicity with her sister:

> Dr. Green instead of speaking to [her sister] as I wanted him to simply telephoned Police and then they wanted to take me down to identify Drug fiends or something of that kind & in order to show my being mixed up with them.

Then again, she might have been suspected of having been a German spy, since she had worked for a German and Dr. McClenahan had taken his name during their interview.

She found it ironic that she was the one committed and not her sister, an addict, to Thing Street Asylum, where any brute of a nurse could beat and abuse her, and where she'd wanted to put her sister herself.

She accused the nurses of viciousness.

She described how, early on the morning of her first day in Thing Street Asylum, she was disturbed by a woman walking continuously in and out of her room. She got up and wandered into the hall, observing the rats flocking in and out of the room she had just vacated. She asked a nurse to see the House Doctor, when lo! the morning nurse came on and warned her, she'd put her in the pack. When Miss Marvel talked back and fenced her around a chair, the nurse attacked her, pulled her hair, doubled her fists, and pounded her temples. Then she stripped her naked. A patient beckoned to her, not to resist.

Later the same patient came to her bed and introduced herself, the in-law of a mutual acquaintance. Miss Marvel wondered in her letter if they might have been put together, to gather first-class personal evidence against the nurses, of patient abuse....

If anything her friend was even more suspicious than herself. Nonetheless Miss Marvel followed her advice to refuse all food she told her was poisoned, but she soon found herself starving. Her ward-mate disturbed her with tales of someone in a contrivance under her bed, told her which side she should get up on, and warned her that for punishment they could be sent to the cellar, among the rats, and bad men....

Miss Marvel clearly doubted some of this, but admitted that, hearing all the noise at night, she sat up, expecting to be killed at any minute.

She refused to eat until one evening Dr. McClenahan came and sat with her during supper. She complained about having to take salts, and not being allowed to go to the toilet, so having to urinate on the wooden floor and be accused of Unclean Habits. Sometimes she had to beg over the fan-light for a nurse to let her out.

The salts were taken from a cup that was passed mouth to mouth from the most loathsome patients, and the thermometer was equally filthy. The spray in the bathroom was usually out of order and couldn't be gotten warm. Nonetheless, the nurses insisted on putting her in the shower, even when she was having trouble with her period.

When she was sent to a dark side room, she remembered her former ward-mate's stories and couldn't sleep or even lie down.

She felt she wouldn't have survived that night in the side room without the vision she described above.

She writes, I saw angels outside....

*****

Refugees from the Virtual Asylum, at Thing and Closed....

Living in Laundromats....

Johnny frequented them occasionally himself....

He'd seen her before.

At J. Zeus Murphy's Zombie Crypt Computerland Emporium. Bad-mouthing fellow mental cases in the third person.

They did this, and that. They filled up that high-rise medium-security church-run jail where she (not just coincidentally) lived. She whined about their little apartment-sized fridges, as if she didn't have one too....

Johnny looked away. He remembered how she showed up with her neighbor after two of J. Zeus's work-fare thugs delivered a worthless piece of JUNK (ie., J. Zeus's Pentium V/X Ultra-Lite 5.1) to her apartment (cell) in the Vertical Asylum. She went hysterical. She screamed, she had been raped. Vi-o-lay-ted.

J. Zeus's volunteers slowly turned, and studied her through Thorazine haze.

A club-foot!

They scoffed, and jeered. You gotta be kidding (fuckin' hag)!

Psychotic fury belying her dumpy anorexic physique, their victim thrashed her cane against J. Zeus Murphy's glass counter-top displaying the latest in computer wizardry to a carefully hand-sorted clientèle of Mental Weaklings: the nodding icons of Mighty Rat 6.1 and Cocky Roach 3 leapt and squealed under the brutal thrashing of Grushenka's cane.

Thing Street Asylum

They seemed alive to J. Zeus Murphy, an illusion born of the intense love he bore his creations, as he rose to defend them.

Poor, hard-done-by soft-wares!

The woman insisted that J. Zeus's work-fare hooligans had tossed handfuls of safes onto her sofa, promising more where these came from, Baby Baby, and a free dot-matrix printer to boot....

She waxed indignant over the dot-matrix printer, that you could buy for five bucks from J. Zeus Murphy's Zombie Crypt Store....

She wasn't no cheap dot-matrix fuck....

Not even a bubble-jet....

The outcome of this outrage was a FREE IBM laser-printer and a new rule at J. Zeus Murphy's Zombie Crypt Store that nobody could make deliveries to the opposite sex, except FAGS....

Now the woman didn't recognize Johnny, which was just fine. She was with a friend. Even more fucking clueless.

She had dirty-blond hair and a rusty winter coat with a scruffy fun-fur collar. She perked up enough to ask Johnny for coffee-money.

She was delusional....

He wouldn't give her a cent. He gave her the mental bum's rush....

*****

E.H. () was readmitted on October 18, 1883.[39] The Certificate completed by Dr. Lynd indicates violent restlessness: talking nonsense.... running & jumping about ... pitches chairs & other articles about, jumping on chairs, tables, etc.

Workman identified her behaviour as the usual symptoms of the second stage of puerperal mania. Workman was in private practice by now. A receipt in E.H.'s file indicates what he was paid, and the degree of networking among loco alienists:

> Hogtown 18th October 1882 $5.00
>
> Received from J Robinson MD Five Dollars in payment of my fee for examination as to the mental state of E.H. and certificate thereof.
>
> Uncle Nestor, MD

*****

The laundromat was owned by Citizen Hearse. Fitting that the quarters poor whites, Pakistanis, Somalis, etc. spent on dirty shorts financed this global money-laundering slumlord racketeer....

Only his dryer didn't work....

He should call the Secretary General of the U.N....

Complain about Bush....

So when they bombed Washington, he'd get his quarter back....

*****

They quarreled over laundry....

Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre and her buddies boozing at the kitchen table....

How come HE got to go OUT for 3 hours?

OUT? If she wanted to go OUT that badly, why didn't she do the laundry herself? For all those brats....

Their real father was the Teamsters....

Of course, her buddies supported her. She had a point.

They believed her; they were stupid enough....

Joan Crawford II was driving him crazy....

She stole the kids, when his brothers' weren't available....

They wanted to be actors....

Joan Crawford got everything ready for a night of TV with the kids.... Jaws IV on the VCR....

It was about her....

---

[39] Admission Order #5522, October 18, 1883, Ministry of Health, Queen Street Mental Health Centre Records, RG 10-20-B-1, Archives of Ontario. Historical diagnoses from the same source, unless otherwise noted.

Pioneers of Alienation

*****

The yellow NO FRILLIES garbage bag under the leaky sink....

Rotten banana peels, used coffee filter-cones like elephant safes, nasty toilet paper, pubic hair....

A sneaking, furtive, touchy-feely scraping of tiny talons on green polyurethane....

To Johnny it was just a lousy mouse, but to itself it was THORAZINIO, a REAL SWELL, the SECRET SHARER of every crummy psych-survivor's living nightmare, fat as a Sharke Institute nurse's ass, faster than a Community Treatment Order....

Fucking stoopid BLACK squirrels got creamed bouncing across Thing Street straight into the headlights of an onrushing streetcar of THE BETTER WAY (TO HELL)....

Not THORAZINIO. He was a WHITE squirrel....

He nonchalantly strolled across the moonlit leaf-strewn sward straight up to the fire hydrant where, with his bare nails, he flipped the sewer grate like a a cataract...

He descended like a limy commuter into space like the gothic nave of a Steam-Age Railway Trestle ....

He was utterly dignified....

He was Sigmund Freud with a fine piece of tail....

Suddenly Thorazinio found himself immersed up to his belly in a veritable pharmacopoeia of neurotoxic SHIT....

*****

Part of the main drain running parallel to the Asylum collapsed in the spring of 1876 and had to be replaced. Dr. Daniel Clark reiterated Workman's old complaint about the faulty construction of the water-closets in the wings.... the cause.... of much discomfort, and the source of disease (204).

The horizontal over-flow pipes leaked badly, saturating the woodwork and making the compartments and corridors unhealthy (205). The sinks had to be replaced in the bathrooms, nearer the perpendicular pipes, and the floors relayed.

Unlike his great predecessor, Dr. Workman, a former hardware salesman who relished the opportunity to display his technical expertise in print, Clark self-consciously insisted on describing such things verbally, while deprecating such descriptions as inadequate, and appealing to the satisfactoriness of a result which he begged us to take on the authority of his word.

In the same year Clark reported the outbreak of an old, related scourge: When the Spring began to open, typhoid fever broke out simultaneously in the Asylum and Central Prison (209). The Asylum and the Central Prison continued to draw their water from the same place, at the western outlet of the Bay (209).

This water was, even to the naked eye, full of animal impurities (209).

To the nose, it stank.

The sediment in a sample taken from the Asylum reservoir consisted of organic matter attributed to the discharge from the city sewers, a dead horse, and a few dogs floating in the Bay (209). Some of the waste came from the Asylum and the Central Prison themselves, since their sewers emptied only 250 feet away from the intake.

Clark described what amounted to a serious threat to the entire city, the contamination of the water supply by the creation along the waterfront of a veritable....

Niagara Falls of Shit....

Of sufficient volume to drive the machinery of a dozen grist mills (209)....

Without being able to ascertain the source of communicable disease beyond indefinable organic matter (210), Clark understood that even when such matter was invisibly diluted it could still propagate disease; much more dangerous, therefore, was the visibly polluted water of Hogtown Harbor. He therefore recommended that the Asylum draw its water from a point directly south, where the open lake could be reached (210). In the meantime, the patients would draw their water from several wells on Asylum property.

After a few weeks of this, the outbreak subsided. This is the closest Clark comes to writing in the grand manner of his predecessor, on his favorite subject....

The Plague of Masturbation!!!

*****

Thorazinio inhaled those island breezes.... Those deli deliquesences.... They expanded his cerebral arteries.... They

IMPLODED HIS BRAIN?! For all along he had been snacking on WARFARIN!!!

*****

Thing Street Asylum

Johnny was reading James Cowles Prichard's A Treatise On Insanity and Other Disorders Affecting the Mind. In a handy pocket-sized edition published by Haswell, Barrington, and Haswello in Philadelphia in 1837.

Prichard was a pro. He addressed Monsieur Esquirol, the dedicatee, as the most distinguished writer of his age, etc....

Kiss, kiss....

He had paratextual distrophy. The typical prefacer's unwholesome desire, as he put it himself, to connect with his work a name which will be handed down to posterity.

Riding on the coat-tails of his patron.

Or the fly....

He wrote him a panegyric.

Esquirol deserved the gratitude of mankind; he got Prichard's.

Like his colleagues, the good doctor never missed an opportunity. Penning this wretched treatise got hin into Dr. Tweedie's idiotic Cyclopaedia of Practical Medicine. The Tweedie-dumb of Tweedle-Dee. Humbly acknowledging that, besides his own tome (of course), there is yet not one work extant.... which exhibits the present state of knowledge and opinion on the whole subject of diseases affecting the mind (4). Especially on Moral Insanity and Monomania, his obsessions.

Moral Insanity was his passion, his nosological test, his bugaboo.

Prichard disagreed with the conventional definition of insanity, as a disorder of the system by which the sound and healthy exercise of the mental faculties is impeded or disturbed; it was too broad. He needed some express limitations that would exclude febrile and inflammatory diseases, stupor, and congenital idiotism, or, in other words, fevers, strokes, idiocy, and senility.

Unlike his glorious successor, Dr. C.(old) K.(illuh) Sharke, he emphasized the non-physiological dimension of insanity. Banished were phrenitus, typhus, lethargy, apoplexy, and other comatose diseases.

Johnny was impressed, but he wasn't getting anywhere. What was insanity, anyway? Prichard tried the nosological approach.

On the basis of disorder or defect of the intellect, there were two principal kinds, moral and intellectual, the latter consisting of three sub-categories: Monomania, Mania, and Dementia. Mania and Dementia didn't interest Johnny. So far he wasn't a raving maniac, or totally demented. But he wondered about Moral Insanity and Monomania. Moral Insanity was:

a morbid perversion of the natural feelings, affections, inclinations, temper, habits, moral dispositions, and natural impulses, without any remarkable disorder or defect of the intellectual or knowing and reasoning faculties, and particularly without any insane illusion or hallucination.

Was this applicable to Johnny's solitary life, his giving up all normal intercourse for the abnormal kind, with Deane's foot, shoe-hoarding, sock-fucking?

Wasn't this perversion of Johnny's natural impulses, if he had any?

What about the last, remaining impulse, his predilection for Deane's foot over every other, public or private, part?

Johnny read on. About Monomania:

> some particular illusion, referring to one subject, and involving one train of ideas, while the intellectual powers appear, when exercised on other subjects, to be in a great measure unimpaired.

He repeated portions of the passage sotto voce: some particular illusion, one subject, one train of ideas, etc.

Johnny was nothing if not over-particular about Deane's foot, his favorite subject, of which he never tired; he had a one-track mind, every siding of which led inexorably to, Deane's foot!

Johnny WAS afflicted with the most severe of temporal calamities. He had a monomania for Deane's foot!

> We may, then, describe insanity as a chronic disease, manifested by deviations from the healthy and natural state of the mind, such deviations consisting either in a moral perversion, or a disorder of the feelings, affections, and habits of the individual, or in intellectual derangement, which last is sometimes partial, namely, in monomania, affecting the understanding only in particular trains of thought; or general, and accompanied with excitement, namely, in mania, or raving madness; or, lastly, confounding or destroying the connections or associations of ideas, and producing a state of incoherence. (17)

*****

That morning Mitzi slipped rat poison into Butch's tricolator....
Not enough to kill him though....
Too bad....
Butch selected a not-too-salty pair of dirty black socks from the heap on the radiator.... Mitzi was off again, about Lady Day and STRANGE FRUIT.... Dilating on her favourite topics.... Lady asleep in her dying granny's arms.... Waking up stone-cold, from the rigor mortis setting in....
Butch said, Not before breakfast, and how come there never were any clean socks....
Mitzi was a SOUTHERN BELLE by nature. After all her talk of postmodern spectacle commodity fetishism generic ambiguity and deconstruction of universals she would have shut the fuck up if somebody had just thrown her the keys to the BIG HOUSE.... On a big iron ring she could whup the blacks with....

*****

SOME RAT dreamed he was THORAZINIO again.... Down in Dixie.... Land of Cotton....
Was cotton good to eat? They had plenty at the BIG HOUSE....
But what was that FAT BITCH doing on the neo-classical colonnaded porch? He recognized her enormous 50s-style red-leather hand-bag....
It was 50s CHIC....
Her high-heels jabbed him....

*****

By 6 A.M. Max the Butcher had already had his first delusions: he was alive, he was SOMEBODY....
He poured his last TWEETIES into a bowl, then he tore up the box, and flushed the pieces down the crapper.
A-rab Spies! They could tell a lot, from a box of TWEETIES....
Babyface Marjoram was looking at himself on the toilet doing ELVIS imitations.... THE KING on his THRONE....

*****

Slim the Cat went out, with SOME RAT....
They passed the evening together, chewing the rag and the head off a WHITE SQUIRREL....

*****

Bozo whipped up a nice big platter of ONIONS.... Fried in CHEF FATSO margarine....
The air filled with greasy smog.... The smoke alarm went off and he trotted over to the second story window....
He raised the sash with loud grunting.... The most work he'd done all year....

*****

Every evening the smoke alarm wailed in the House.
Bozo was cooking a roast.
He always started late, because he spent so much time yacking with his boyfriends, on the phone.
Woe to anyone who wanted to used the kitchen.
He cooked the roast his way. He started late, but caught up by putting it in on high at 8 P.M., after sousing it with a whole bottle of Bovril. He wouldn't look at it again till 11 P.M. Whether it was done didn’t matter. Bozo was.
At 11:30 he washed whatever dishes he'd been unable to avoid getting dirty and composed himself for the night’s reading, from the Kama Sutra.

The alarm wailed.
Bozo didn't care.

The meat was burning.

*****

Johnny remembered something peculiar about Bozo.

He insisted that the apple juice go into the clear pitcher and the orange juice into the blue one. This arrangement came up when Johnny inadvertently violated it shortly after his arrival.

He'd prepared a roast in their dysfunctional oven. Unfortunately, he mixed the gravy in the blue pitcher, the one Bozo reserved for orange juice. He left the gravy, in the blue pitcher, on the counter.

When Bozo saw it, he escalated. He taped an angry red-highlighted note to the T.V. in the parlor.

Never use the blue pitcher for anything except orange juice.

Never use the orange juice for anything except breakfast.

Bozo subsequently stashed breakfast only orange juice in the freezer.

He had other quirks.

He turned off the T.V. precisely at midnight and kicked everyone out of the Smoking Room. He locked the remote control in the cabinet. Then he turned off the air-conditioner, and locked it too.

Bozo wore his keys on a rope that he was careful never to hang around his neck.

*****

Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre dreamed of suiciding after a bipolar disaster and getting posthumously elected MAYOR of THING STREET in a groundswell of popular support and sentimental emotional outpouring....

She'd get her mug-shot on every spaghetti carton and pasta-sauce can in DADANIA....

She'd replace MAMA BRAVO....

She'd screw Citizen Hearse, and get the Hot Food franchise in every Psychome in the country....

After squandering her funding on haberdashery, she'd feed her clients donations....

Time-server on every Mental Hygiene Committee in Hogtown....

They loved her trade-mark big sombrero....

So chic....

You could get discharged in the morning, pick up your rags, get something to eat, pay your rent, have a relapse and do it all over again, and never lose sight of a certain pair of eyes, squinting under a hat-brim....

Crusader on behalf of inmates of Thing Street Psychomes.... Conducting local politicos on tours of the Hood.... A noble tradition.... The Grand Rounds.... The Patient's Advocate.... You could freeze to death on the street, or burn to death in a Psychome.... GUESS WHO would turn up at the Inquest!.... Like Kleenex, only dirtier.... The darling of all good-doing Hogtown matrons.... She was so strong....

Honey, you aint like dem udder loonies, datz fo sho. Lady Eatone congratulated her.

Vive la difference....

Owe, how DID you stand it, dahling.... Living with LUNATICS for a WHOLE YEAR....

That sounded like none other than M'Lady West-Inn....

She could have answered, By suck-holing authorities, like you....

Becoming a Mental Hell PIMP....

Charlie Handy, Citizen Hearse, C. Lamprini Eel....

They were only the beginning....

She learned how to WORK THE SYSTEM.... Which made her part of it.... The part that fucked you over....

How many had the World's Greatest Female Corn-Holer fucked over, anyway?

Once, out of the blue, a guy wandered into Johnny's Thing Store offering his old laptop for twenty bucks. Claiming to have been her client.

Poor fuck. How many had the consumer's consumer undone?

Immaculate consumption....

Once, an unusually candid customer asked Johnny if refinishing a particular piece of junk wouldn't just fuck it up....

Some of them pretended to be shocked, but who were they kidding? Johnny himself felt fucked most of the time, not nicely either....

Like something somebody had enjoyed, or at least used, and discarded....

Too many like Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre had had their way with him....

Up his ass like a pile-driver....

Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre, a legend....

She'd even replace Charles Waldorf Handy....

*****

She remembered how she shrieked and screamed that Christmas long ago, after she realized that the freak in the Santy suit wasn't Santy Claus; he was her creepy old man, Alapaloozah, on a bender.

He trashed Christmas, forever.

Pioneers of Alienation

Right after the Christmas Message, threatening to drive her little darlings into a pylon on the 4-oh-1 if he couldn't bang her Christmas Eve....

The guy ringing the bell beside the Salvation Army drop-box, the guy on the massive throne in the Buffer Inn Mall....

Either one could have been her old man....

Or both....

Maybe her OLD MAN got himself cloned....

He would never have trusted his posterity, his delicate coronet-playing gene, his artistic sensibility, his thick blubber lips, his heavy Cro-Magnon brow to Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre, who would only betray the splendid inheritance of his seed, pearls without price, spilled before swine, who scattered them again, rutting around for vegetables and other rotten garbage with Thorazinio, Super Squirrel....

She eloped from reality. From OLD MAN SANTY....

She became Santy...

High atop the throne of papier-mache and shit in the grand piazza of the Buffer Inn Mall, she belched, and farted into the dull-red tobaccy-stained Santy Suit.

She'd just finished encouraging the little bitch in her lap to off her own OLD MAN at the earliest opportunity by pouring a little paint stripper into OLD MILWAUKEE, when she noticed a commotion in the middle of the line of suppliant children snaking its way slowly across the mall.

Some horrible old fart with a trembling bald head, bad teeth, and bad breath (she smelled where she sat) was shrieking that he was gonna have'm all A-rested for blocking the passage of his go-cart to the can....

Of course, her OLD MAN....

Alapaloozah....

Kiddies, bring that OLD FART up here....

At first the OLD FART resisted, but the kiddies were a product of his NO FRILLIES education system.... Some of them had knives....

They dragged his carcass up the steps to SANTY's throne....

He calmed down a little.... He stopped kicking and screaming.... He was only twitching and whining....

He didn't wanna see Santy, he didn't wanna see Santy.... He didn't have any particular desire to get acquainted, having played Santy himself on numerous occasions, especially on benders.... He couldn't quite suppress a mischievous giggle, thinking of them benders....

Then he was draped across SANTY's enormous heaving thighs; his lame legs hung motionless like sausages, and his arms flailed madly like a baby's, in a fit....

Santy said, You been BAD, then she ripped open his polyester slacks exposing his naked hairless cheeks....

Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre removed the reindeer antlers from her throne, and stuck them up his ass....

Alapaloozah.... She whispered so vehemently, he started screaming....

The kiddies broke into a rousing chorus of RUDOLF....

They were on crack....

*****

Alapaloozah dreamed that he gave the greatest speech of his political career. His final fuck yuh....

He flew over the province in his private jumbo stealth bomber. Surveyed the miles-below devastation. Strip mining. Acid rain. So pretty....

It made him think of his many years of serve-ass. How he just didn't feel like running for a twenty-second term....

That's T.U.R.N.... At the public sphincter....

Not that it wouldn't do the pubic.... As well as the privy sector... Good to eliminate commies and most of all those rotten squeegee punks.... Hijacking Ministerial Sports Utility Vehicles.... Terrorizing S.S.-uniformed chauffeurs with red dish rags... Begging for change...

There were those pesky lawsuits from the Indians whose chief his thugs assassinated because he wouldn't surrender the aboriginal rights to that sacred burial ground he wanted to turn into a private golf course, all for himself, mighty-sphinctered Alapaloozah, Prime Sinister of Dadania....

There was Wackyton whose residents got indignant after he poisoned them with his No Frillies Water Works. He made his nephew, the garbage man, Commissioner, even though he didn't have Grade 8, to refute Emersonian self-reliance and prove nobody needed schools. Now thousands of school-kids whose lunch-money he had stolen only to lose it playing the stocks were coming of voting age....

O, why hadn't The Youth obeyed the dictates of blind superstition his faithful well-paid social-workers endeavored to bludgeon into their thick numbskulls, and forgiven their well-intentioned if fiscally irrepressible CZAR?

Indeed, he had but obeyed the commandants of reason by not returning their lunch money, but that was different and personally he didn't believe in honesty anyway. Forgiveness, by others of himself, now that was something. But this cramming religion down his gullet after a life-time spewing it out.... It really made him PUKE....

Yes, thinking about those pretty strip-mines again, it was time to retire....

He thought in terms of racist cliches, so he eloped from reality as his own worst caricature of a big black NANNY, the best his stunted imagination could do....

The BIG HOUSE resembled his official residence, the PRIME MINISTERIAL PORK PALACE, its bricks the delicate pink of freshly butchered swine....

The limo-port normally full of panting Sports Utility Vehicles had been converted into a scuppernong arbor....

His cabinet invaded the senate chamber and put their stinking spats up on the classy mahogany desks beside carpet-bags bulging with public money that had been delegated to orphanages to, FOOD-BANKS....

O, it was getting SEXY.... It was getting HOT....

His MINISTER OF FINANCE was the NEW MASSA.... He himself was relegated to the pantry, where his BIG BLACK BOTTOM subsisted on table-scraps and beatings, thanks to the economic apartheid policies of his own government, which only yesterday at the annual banquet of THING STREET BOOSTERS he had boasted were the most enlightened in the universe.... In the COSMOS, for Chrisake....

Then the bitch whose dirty shorts he had just laundered turned out to be his daughter, the slut, Trixie Zane....

A dim brutish memory of the pangs of childbirth one score years ago.... Before that a hot spasm of pleasure with Massa.... Real dim, thanks to all the gin....

Phrases hopped uncontrollably out of his mouth, like chiggers.... LAWDY LAWDY and BURN ME JUDGE.... His dream was becoming a horrible nightmare.... He wanted to elope from the elopement but it was too late.... He whelped a whole bitch of a bastard non-nation....

Filmed by BOY, as D.W. Griffith as Leni Riefenstahl....

Yeah, sometimes a Strange Nation....

Maybe he'd get a spot on a white sitcom....

Imitation of Life....

Floor-length boobs and a QUACK-QUACK....

*****

The populace imagined the loss of Alapaloozah, that great liberal humanist benefactor of madkind and world-class ace used-car salesman.

Their collective consciousness commemorated it with ornate high-masses in all the orthodox cathedrals and Mazda dealerships....

The big dirt nap.

Loyal folk bore full-length advertisements torn from consecrated back-issues of BUY AND SELL. On either side of these brightly colored life-like facsimiles salesmen waved the sacred irons, the very same the Big Pal-Loser was using when a massive blood-clot stealthily entered his mighty brain-pan....

Beneath the throbbing solar hub-cap, his great paws gripping his sweating rod, for once in his instinctual life what could accurately be called a cerebral event drove him, with deadlier force than his own once powerful STROKE, six feet deep into the sand trap called Hell.

Alapaloozah. Below bogey at 51....

He was a real mother-fucker....

*****

Johnny would have preserved those clubs in his Thing Store, along with other icons & sacred relics, like the toilet paper dispenser from the crapper in Gramma's Pro Shop, where Alapaloozah did his BUSINESS....

*****

Thing Street was haunted by Johnny's old abandoned shit-jobs. Haunted thing stores, thrift shops. That never did any business, except on Halloween.

Fortunately on Thing Street Halloween was a year-round spectacular.

The Thing Street Better Business Bureau's Sidewalk Sale of the Living Dead.

Johnny's customers!

Pioneers of Alienation

The stuff they bought was STIFFS! Corpses cadavers offal and detritus of high-school dissection-class. Hard bargains. Griselda in her crone's bonnet with a Surgeon-General's Warning around her neck. Instead of a toe-tag. Asking what can I buy for a quarter? Well, let's see....

Hallowe'ene on Thing Street.... Again.... Always....

Baldy Blandish on the Milquetoast Broadcasting Hour said it was now second only to Xmas.... In terms of money spent.... Earning power.... Contribution to the gross national product.... Those kiddies ringing the doorbell downstairs.... Getting their candy kisses.... Ringing Johnny's bell by mistake.... That's for sure.... Disturbing his garret gloom.... They accounted for 7 billion U.S.....

All Hallows' Eve....

Bigger than Christmas....

Bigger than JESUS CHRIST....

Bigger even than General Electric....

Life went best, with Death....

*****

He had a box of negatives from the 40s that he put aside for himself. His job provided him with plenty of opportunities to skim.

They were old-fashioned square negatives taken with a Brownie. Black and white, of course. He was slowly getting them developed, batch by batch, for 69 cents each, at the Thing Street Psychopharm. The lab did a good job. The copies were probably clearer than the original photos, wherever they were.

They were mainly pictures of things in their 30s and 40s, at a picnic or a summer camp....

Everyone smoked, and the men looked handsome (to Johnny), with short hair-cuts and wire-rimmed glasses, broad shoulders in tight T-shirts that accentuated their nipples, and big boxy cars in the background....

They had beautiful feet....

*****

Rustling and squeaking in J. Zeus Murphy's Zombie Crypt Store. Strictly off-limits to human beings. His employees were mental-cases, but the febrile rat-like alacrity, the very opposite of the usual sullen moribund passivity, meant it wasn't a Crypt Zombie.

A faded green beret worn with impertinent swagger. A moldering blue leather jacket torn from the beer and ciggy-bloated carcass of a candidate for a B.Sc. from the Engineering School of the U of Titz, circa 1910. The rags appeared to have been hung on a skeleton, or loose assortment of bones, possibly not all from the same creature, or species.

Johnny was appalled to hear, it could talk. It even had a sound-track. A medley of sound-bites from Ed Wood movies. It crepitated phrases like, Got any smalls today?

It was seeking its own kind: DEALERS.

*****

O, it's pretty.

I just like it!

This should brighten up the place....

*****

A yellow chair upside down on a plain pine dresser, its cushion between the upside-down chair-legs. On top of the cushion, Johnny's green paratrooper bag. Behind the paratrooper bag, the upside down Tiffany-style legs of a mahogany dining table. Behind the legs a portion of a large mirror attached to a mahogany dresser totally obscured by the upside-down chair and the dresser. To the right of them the top of a dysfunctional red mahogany Philco hi-fi cabinet, perched on a pine harvest table, which Johnny couldn't see behind all the books, but which he knew only had three good legs, the fourth being propped on a few volumes of a broken set of the Book of Knowledge....

On the Philco a ceiling light fixture (ornate imitation brass), a roll of paper towels, a red radio made to look like the front of a 1957 Chevy, a gilt plaster chariot candy dish, and more books....

A harvest table on the right side of the aisle. On top of the harvest table some old photo albums and a sewing machine. On the left side of the aisle, barely visible from Johnny's perspective, a large green Ottoman high atop a stack of bedside tables....

Thing Street Asylum

Clocks without hands which even the numbers had worn off the dials of, radios with ripped speaker-curtains exposing empty tubeless sockets, unplayable scratched Long Play records and broken unbreakable 78's....

Fixtures torn from the vestibules of banks and bankers' mansions, bits of plaster molding sticking to the wires, like fragments of jaw-bone....

Gilt fleurs de lis....

A barrel-shaped table-leg....

A painting called Admiral Bowman....

Edison AMBEROLS in perfect mint condition....

*****

He had half a dozen turn-tables. He liked them, even when they didn't work. Apart from the old designs and the trademarks (his favorite being His Master's Voice, the one with Nipper), what he liked about them was that they'd play old 78s. He got a big kick out of playing really old records....

Red Seal Victrola recordings from the 1900s....

The lyrics embossed on the B side....

*****

It looked like a 45 because of the big hole for the adapter. 78s and LPs had smaller holes.

It came in the envelope it had been mailed in. With a stamp dated November 11, 1941. Too old for a 45.

He remembered some obscure shit about records....

He had a head FULL of such crap....

The envelope was addressed to a married woman. She had the same surname as the sender, a private at a military base in Georgia. Johnny guessed they were married, and the record inside, worn and labeled with an old-fashioned PEPSI logo, was the private message he'd recorded just for her, in a little kiosk that the Pepsi Co. ran for the war effort.

The young uniformed man lined up with his comrades for a turn at the apparatus. A farmer, a red-neck....

Johnny thought of Robert Johnson and Leadbelly, recording on field machines for the Smithsonian....

He had a head FULL of such crap....

Whoever the soldier was, he wrote a very childish scrawl....

This record never wound up at the Smithsonian....

Johnny found it in a bin of old photographs under a box of puzzles from the woman upstairs. She bought them for one dollar each, put them together, then threw them back into the box and returned them to Johnny for free, attaching a little note indicating the missing pieces....

Where was he?

In Romeo's store, showing him the record.

What is it? Romeo demanded, as if he didn't know.

A record. A 45, I think.... Johnny said, innocently....

Where did you find that, Romeo demanded, pseudo-indignant. You must have taken it out of the display case....

Johnny supposed he was protesting in order to inflate the price.... Romeo never bothered to put anything in the case....

How much? It was Johnny's turn to ask something.

That? O, my.... That's expensive. That's.... Romeo paused for effect, to build up the price in order to make Johnny appreciate his bargain, when he got it.... Let's see....

Johnny supposed it was (really, only) worth 5 dollars....

Romeo let him have it for 20....

*****

Our whole tradition is past oral;
this is a record of recordings....

*****

The things that bought vinyl records. Happiest squirreling through bins of discs.

The Sharke would have certified them.

Degenerates, descendants of music-hall tarts, pimps, Occupational Wanderers....

One even wore latex gloves. Minnie Mouse?!

Another, after finding 30 choice additions to his enormous collection of Bertie Williams favorites, asked Johnny to please organize his records in alphabetical order, by artist and genre.

Johnny said, fuck yourself!

*****

Romeo said they were thingaholics. Into substitution in a big way....

*****

Elmer B. Porko schmoozed at the Hoftbrauhaus (formerly Fartful Codger). Fake anglophile prep-joint selling diluted soap-suds to civil servants and copy-editors from the U of Titz Press across the street.

Porko placed a stinking hoof on the brass rail. Sour cream and onions. Pee-yew! His ten dollar Crypt coat. Sausage in a moldy roll. Everyone started vomiting the ploughman's lunch.

A pint, he said, the bossy swine.

Someone threw an empty glass at his head.

Ha ha ha, he said. How about putting something in it?

How about a bullet? Smart-ass theater-school bottle-washer nudging and winking at his fellow flunkies.

Excuse me, sir. My name is Elmer B. Porko. As in Lester B. Pince-Nez. But with Elmer in front and Porko behind.

Porko behind? Nudging and winking. Flunkies giggling at the loony in the sausage roll. Weenie in a bun.

Does Itms want it full-up? Nudge nudge wink wink. Does it, really?

Yeth! I mean yes-s-s. To the brim-m-m. With one and one half centimeters of lovely rich thick creamy head. Pre-cise-ly!

Pre-cise-ly? Fondling the zipper on his monkey-pants.

Pre-cise-ly! Porko giving him the famous mandarin nod of purely formal acknowledgment. Fellow flunkies ogling the throbbing bulge in the bottle-washer's pants. Squealing with anticipatory pleasure. The bottle-washer nudging and winking more furiously than ever.

Oh my gaw-w-wd!

Why what is it? Whatever is the matter? Has the Ministry fallen?

What did you say your name was?

Elmer B. Porko. As in....

It's you! It's you! It's really really you!

It's him! It's him! It's him! The monkey choir shrieked and chanted behind him.

This afternoon.... Start of my shift.... Mysterious messenger.... Wearing livery.... Union of Dadania Civil Servants.... Totally silent.... Carrying a brand-new portfolio.... A sealed manila envelope bearing the mysterious legend [he paused significantly then everyone shouted]....

ELMER B. PORKO!!!

It's come! My PACKAGE DEAL! At last!

Come and get it! He said, making room for him behind the bar and throwing a greasy old pay-stub on the counter.

My package! At last! At last! At last! Porko cackled hysterically, not noticing as the bottle-washer carefully parted the flaps of the sausage coat and unfastened his safety-belt from behind....

He was straining away at Porko's porthole while the whole flunky choir cheered him on.

It's not here! It's not here! It's not here! Shrieked Porko, turning the greasy old pay-stub over and over.

Sorry to do this to you, JOHNNY!

His package came. Loads of it. Thick rich creamy head. But he didn't get it.

His ass-hole was paralyzed.

His wig flew off.

He was strictly a tap-room man....

*****

Discussing Thing Street with Trixie. Under Alapaloozah the Landlords got even greedier. The Best Lodge was the finest cell-block on Thing Street till Citizen Hearse and his scions, Vaslav and Ulyanov got it.

Slowly the Best Lodge started to run down. In a few years it was full of old things.

Thing Street Asylum

Now with Alapaloozah in power it was legal to raise the rent 1000% after Hearse and Sons drove out the previous tenants.

Johnny remembered delivering a used TV set to Vince in the Best Lodge. How eager Vince was for a color TV. When Johnny told him that they had one his whole face lit up. The TV also lit up, but they didn't have a cable connection. Johnny promised to deliver the set that Friday.

Friday was only tomorrow, but Vince came back several times, wondering where his TV was, and worrying that they might not make it. He'd canceled a dinner engagement, to be home for it. Johnny never would have imagined it. Vince, caught up in the social whirl. Asylum Donuts, Coffee Slime, Handy Haven, etc....

Vince was afraid he wouldn't hear the buzzer. Something else Citizen Hearse had failed to fix.

Johnny was relieved when the TV worked. It was a Zenith. Now Vincent passed the store twice a week. He bummed money for cigarettes. He said he was suffering from some sort of disability. He was supposed to get an allowance, but it had been held up and they hadn't had time to reactivate his welfare claim.

Citizen Hearse gave money to J. Zeus Murphy. J. Zeus Murphy supported Counsellor Bizz Kukzinksy. The National Socialist candidate for Thing Street. Trixie explained how she had been in the Best Lodge herself and joined the renters' Liberation Movement out of sheer frustration with the landlord's inability or refusal to maintain the building. Not to mention his annoying habit of leaving long-dead WHITE SQUIRRELS and cats at the doors of unwanted tenants. He refused to let them have pets, because they smelled....

At first J. Zeus Murphy himself had been welcome as a member of The Movement. He was a businessman, a model for the youth, etc. He gave everyone a free computer. Then Trixie noticed that every thing they discussed in the Movement was known by Citizen Hearse at City Hall a few minutes later. Details of her sex life appeared on the world-wide web.

J. Zeus Murphy was a SPY!

*****

The Jamaican lady and the Chinese lady.

The Jamaican lady left her little red wagon in the doorway.

The Chinese lady picked it up and brought it into the store.

Jah Lo See demanded, how much?

Johnny said it wasn't for sale.

So why'd she leave it right in the doorway for everybody to trip over? Is she stupid or something? I could've broken my neck.

Johnny was about to say, that was why....

The Jamaican lady heard, and grabbed the wagon away from her. She protested that she had put her wagon out of the way.

Jah Lo See told her to calm down. She was just joking.

The Jamaican lady said she was offended. They didn't know each other well enough to joke.

Jah Lo See said at least she had a sense of humor.

Jah Lo See knew Thing Street really well. She walked everywhere. She knew every store, every alley. She started to talk about her husband. Soon she was raving.

Her husband wanted to know how much her disability was.

You mean, totally MAIMED?

No, the CHEQUE, stupid.

She told him it was none of his business. The government knew everything about her there was to know. That was enough for her. What she did with her money was nobody's business but hers.

Jah Lo See told Johnny not to double-cross her.

Johnny promised he wouldn't.

She was with The Triad. She'd rub him out. She said working in Johnny's thing store would drive her crazy.

Johnny said she might as well work there then. She was already crazy.

She walked around all day. She knew exactly what was in all the garbage. She took it home and saved it. She hated to throw anything out. She asked Johnny if he wanted some nice copper wire, a paperback, a picture. He said he'd take the wire, and the picture. She could keep the book. It was a copy of Pioneers of Alienism and 50s Sci-Fi at Thing Street Asylum, 1850-1920....

The picture was a still-shot of Tara, from Gone with the Wind. She said it was Thing Street Asylum.

She was poor, but she was honest.

She was crazy...

*****

Bums of forty continents stammering a thousand argots....

Dynasties with serious HEREDITARY TAINT. Thirty generations of whores and pimps....

I observed that the mother was unnaturally lean and spare, in prim and proper gold-rimmed pince nez, rather like a school teacher at Upper Dadania College of yore....

My alma mater was a strictly male environment however. None of the teachers was any good. They were secret masturbators and worse weaklings....

What a relief, for a brief idyll in 1870, at THING STREET ASYLUM, to enjoy the manly protection of the greatest alienist of them all, DOCTOR Joseph Workman....

I digress.....

The father is lean, mean and hard. Expensive brand-new bright white espadrilles, powder-blue jean-jacket, Levi's....

Three generations on Thing Street, the mother pushing the baby in its carriage, the daughter gawking stupidly around (pregnant AGAIN!), the father watching her like her pimp, which he is....

All MORAL IDIOTS....

The daughter lanky, blond, still attractive but over-ripe. After four face-lifts she looks permanently anesthetized. Her vacant expression will never be occupied. Her breasts decline from the perpendicular. She is rumored to be in her late 40s or 50s, a HIGH-GRADE MORON....

I warned them about this. LADY EATONE was the only one that listened....

I believe that this nation should commit itself....

Love,

Killuh.

*****

Everyone hated everyone else. The Jamaican art-dealer (he'd sold something to Sotheby's, once) came in. He noticed a book by a crack-pot: Jews Without Money.

Johnny wanted 3 dollars for it. It originally sold at two, for thirty-five cents. Jack would have burst a vessel over that.

The Jamaican wanted it. Nothing was too much for it. He waved it triumphantly in the air....

The book challenged the generalization that Jews were rich. The Jamaican wanted to hear what the Jews had to say for themselves.

There had been another bombing in the Middle East. He was incensed about the situation....

The U.S.A. had to act. Only they could stop it. Only they wouldn't, because the Jews controlled the U.S.A. Look at Arsenio Hall....

Johnny asked, What happened to Arsenio Hall....

Blacklisted! Because he invited Rev. Louis to appear on his show. Against the wishes of his Jewish Masters....

The Polish used-car salesman came by. The one with Chopin's face on his headboard. Johnny put some Chopin on the stereo. He showed him the CD. It was Rubinstein playing.

A Pole, Johnny said.

A Jew....

*****

A nervous white-haired lady in gold-rimmed glasses. She bought a 20-year-old FM radio for $5 from Johnny. She said she wanted it to drown out her neighbor's music. She was tired of asking her to turn it down.

She returned two weeks later and told him in a quavery voice how well the radio worked. Then she asked him to repair something her daughter had given her.

It was a cheap, plaster statue of a fountain with a bird on it. When you turned it on the little bird sang.

It reminded Johnny of that stupid poem by Yeats about an emperor and a mechanical singing bird. The mechanical bird was supposed to be an emblem of eternity.

Now Johnny saw it was really a piece of junk for an old lady from an indifferent daughter. The emperor was an object of scorn.

The batteries were dead. He replaced them with the batteries from his calculator. The bird sang. The old lady was ecstatic. She set out for Byzantium. It was full of Presbyterians.

The shit they taught you at school.

Thing Street Asylum

*****

Trixie slumming.

She asked Johnny the price of a cheap, gaudy picture frame.

Plastic French Provincial.

Johnny said 50 cents.

She nodded at a seedy looking Chinese guy. Johnny hadn't noticed him in the shadows of Thing Street....

That was the deal-maker; the Chinese guy paid for the whore's picture-frame before following her down Thing Street.

Framed....

*****

Doctors and social workers were the worst....

Trixie Zane only bought the very worst things. She admitted that when the shit in the store wasn't bad enough, she stole GARBAGE off the curb. She took a long time to pay for her things, and even longer to let them deliver them. Sometimes her things got sold again by mistake. Then she wanted a credit. The credit was always for more than the original things were worth.

She applied her (grossly inflated) credit to an old beat-up library table that her colleague, Dr. Praetorius, had wanted but never paid for. That was before Christmas. Two weeks into the New Year the library table was still there, in the way. Finally she came into the store. Johnny pounced on her with his accounts book, trying to get her to pay.

W-where's Romeo, she asked, trembling.

Johnny said, Romeo's not here.

W-well, I always talk to Romeo, she said.

We have to deliver the table, Johnny said. We need a hundred bucks.

But I don't have a hundred dollars, she said. And you can't deliver it; I work.

We work too, Johnny said. We can't do our work if we can't deliver this table....

She gave Johnny her home telephone number, and the number of her pager.

*****

Doc Praetorius was buying a house. The basement of Romeo's store was full of the shit he'd already bought for it. Johnny's boss couldn't wait to get rid of it. He could really use the space. For a coffee-shop, a bicycle repair shop, a Rathskeller, a 5-star French café grill, an authentically restored 15th-century Spanish galleon galley. All it needed was some stairs, a couple of windows....

Doc Praetorius favored enormously heavy china cabinets made of sawdust and glue, over-stuffed green-upholstered easy-boy rockers with wobbly arms, massive dining tables with legs like pickle-barrels, boxy end-tables, ugly lamps, and cheap glassware and nicknacks of all kinds.

He wanted a dressing-table with tubular steel legs and a glass top and a small mirror in a gold-painted frame on a swivel. And he wanted a set of eight glass stein's commemorating the centennial of the Statue of Liberty. The dressing-table cost 40 dollars, the steins 10.

Doc Praetorius grimaced; he ground his teeth. Was that the best Johnny could do?

All right, Johnny said. He could have the dressing-table and the steins for 40 dollars.

Praetorius shook his head and made a disapproving little moue. I'll talk to Romeo, he said; he always gives me a deal.

I'll talk to him first, Johnny said.

Well, said Doc Praetorius. Maybe I'll just pass, if you won't be polite....

He was furnishing his MODEL SUITE....

*****

It looked like they'd never get rid of Doc Praetorius's hideous worthless crap, unless they loaned him the $5000 closing fee he still had to pay before he could get his thing house. He didn't have that kind of money.

Sure, he got a few grand for every brain he cut, and sewed up, with the big loopy stitches of a kindergarten drop-out....

It didn't matter, if the patient died; he still got paid.

But he blew his earnings from scores of lobotomies on a crack-brained scheme to supply, for an immoderate ransom of course, the Panamanian Transit Commission with the derelict buses of Hogtown's Better Way.

The buses never arrived....

They were hijacked and burned in the suburbs of Mexico City....

Doc Praetorius passed by when Johnny was alone. Grief-stricken.

Romeo, Romeo....

Johnny knew he was looking for a loan, and warned Romeo when he got back. Romeo said, he'd be naive to ask.

He must have been naïve....

He pleaded. If he didn't close the deal in time, he'd lose his deposit.

Romeo said, He had his own problems....

Praetorius....

Johnny assumed he belonged to a church, or a good Credit Union. He suggested he ask one or the other. Maybe they'd take up a collection.

He said, He'd tried them, but they'd turned him down.

Something about a few dozen husks of buses, smoking on the road to Panama, Johnny suggested, cruelly taunting? He knew the good doctor was lying....

Doc Praetorius stalked past the Thing Store several times daily, looking downcast in a large sombrero. Then on the very eve of the closing date he pranced in, beaming.

The Things' Credit Union of the Holy Baby Jesus had loaned him the dough.

The Kid came through....

*****

Now, after months of begging Doc Praetorius to take away his things, Romeo was never around when his driver called with the van.

On those rare occasions when Romeo was in the store, the driver wasn't around, bed-ridden with some mysterious, chronic, malarial disease.....

Praetorius's Latin temper flared, or maybe it was malaria....

He wasted an entire afternoon, hunting for a barrel-shaped table-leg....

Praetorius bought garbage. So what if he'd paid for it. He should have cut his losses, and left everything in the Thing Store, where it belonged.

But Praetorius thought it was all beautiful....

Praetorius's dream home slowly filled up with things. His driver quit, and his girl-friend was packing; she said there was no room for her stuff, he bought THINGS, etc.

Of course, Johnny thought. They were a Thing Store....

*****

In short-shorts, sweater, wearing Deane's white runners. Pausing on his bike to examine the oak desk chair. Then he noticed the books that Johnny had placed on it, under the big, lurid-orange FOR SALE sign.

Feet sore?

Hot, he said. He tugged at his sweater.

Hot? The sky was overcast; it was beginning to rain.

From riding, the cutie explained. Yesterday it was so cold, today he even wore a sweater. He resumed reading.

What is this, he asked. Johnny told him. Somebody wrote it?

Yes, Johnny said; I wrote it.

The man read some more, as Johnny started bringing the things inside; he wanted to close at seven, and it was six-thirty.

The young man walked his bike in front of the store and chained it to a newspaper box. He still had Johnny's book in his hand; Johnny supposed, he had made a sale.

Johnny finally asked him his name.

Bruce, he said.

He didn't recognize him....

*****

Thing Street Asylum

Marek Finkelburgher gingerly mounted high on his saddle-throne of genuine imitation leather-look ALL NEW MATERIAL, and scanned the horizon for Yorkshiremen.

Big strong silent.

In dress-shirt, tie, and vest (or just a dress). Turning slowly from the bar. Ciggies dangling from thick lips. Offering directions to the nearest Bronte.

Marek Finkelburgher resembled a teddy-bear with a nasty bad habit.

His owner must have slapped him around a lot for it, whatever it was.

The unpardonable sin.

Secret self-pollution.

As directing editor of the U of Titz P, he had some big crimes on his hands. Big fat tomes full....

He needed direction, physical as well as verbal chastisement.

Ditto his entire stable of carping alcoholic copy-editing bitches.

Finkelburgher bumbled up to the bar. His bitches took over a table that had previously been occupied by a couple of scholars quietly discussing Fichte and Hegel.

Fuck yuh, bums, Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre raised her nipperkin. Copy-editing was her latest front. It expanded her mental horizon....

If you aint buyin', you can shove off right now, yuh fairy.

Yeth! chimed Trixie, her buxom companion. Finky, buy drinky!

O, my, and goodness, spake the Hegelians.

Don't you o my goodness me, yuh fuckin' Shirley Temples, Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre delicately chided them, as they departed for the realm of pure, non-alcoholic spirits.

She was editing the U of Titz deluxe coffee-table edition of St. Augustine's Confessions; she posed for the kinkier engravings. Maybe, later, they'd let her edit something special, like, the All-Frankie Festschrift....

Meanwhile, she hated German idealists, whose philosophical positivism reminded her of nothing so much as that insipid chit.

Whatever happened, stubbing her toe with Bo Jangles, or miscegenating, she said, O, my goodness....

She must have practiced saying it for hours in front of a mirror. How else could she have achieved that amazing inflection, on which she based her whole career?

Meanwhile Finkelburgher was raving about some shit he'd heard last night on the Milquetoast Broadcasting Company's cheapo phone-in Talk Show. How Killuh Sharke beat the Loonies. Finkelburgher raving like one himself....

What a fucker that Killuh was with his low to high-grade morons, his d-genrats, his d-fects, his m-grants, his feebs....

His copy-editors....

Very well, he said. I'll treat. On one condition....

Yeah?

Get me, Thing Street Asylum!

Finky, you been drinking? What would you want with an old INSANE ASYLUM?

Finkelburgher, with the bi-polar dis. Worse than a feeb himself....

Not the asylum, you fool. The book, Johnny's book....

You want me to copy-edit Pioneers of Alienation? Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre was appalled. The night was young, but she nearly fell off her bar-stool....

No one can copy-edit that shit. It'll KILL me!

Relax, baby. I want you to steal it....

Bending dark flowers to Finkelburgher's cloacal sun, fellating green-moldering pipe-stems between the heavy petals of their slack and sensuous mouths, a boy-choir of hairy-chested Yorkshiremen, wearing nothing but the skimpiest leather vests, slowly rotated and farted on candy-colored vinyl bar-stools.

Nothing like a limy pub for gas....

Marek Finkelburgher. MANAGING DIRECTOR of the U of Titz PRESS....

*****

Porko said he'd worked for THE UNIFICATION (TYPEWRITER) CO. OF BEIJING.

His OLD MAN told him to get into TYPEWRITERS: NOT P.C.s TYPEWRITERS! MANUAL TYPEWRITERS!!!

So when his boss at UNIFICATION CO. asked him what he wanted to do, he said TYPEWRITERS, MANUAL TYPEWRITERS.

Porko hung on.

At UNIFICATION CO. they bought a special typewriter just for him. He showed them how to set-up a network using a mechanical keyboard.... Using his right big toe for a power source and his erect left nipple for an antenna....

He realized, after a few more years at THE UNIFICATION TYPEWRITER CO., his OLD MAN was Wrong!

The P.C. wasn't a flash in the pan, after all....

The company was dying, which was a real shame considering that it had been founded over a century ago by none other than the founder of DADANIA itself, JOHN A. SHYSTER....

Then again, so was the whole planet....

Dying, that is....

He showed the employees how to save their data at the end of the working day by pressing repeatedly on the back-space key....

But the day he decided to take his bastards to the circus, the manual network crashed....

On the way to work, the girls in Capri pants gave him such a hard-on he got stuck in the subway....

Everyone ran around like chickens, with their heads cut off....

They fired him for Priapism....

That was his last real job, in 1985. He'd worked till now on a variety of contracts. Now he was unemployed, like everyone else....

*****

Johnny took the Thing Street car to Ground Zero.

A fag got on. Bald head, sun hat with badges around the band, Hawaiian necklace, ear-ring.

Johnny spotted him, immediately....

A fat woman followed with an enormous two-seater baby carriage. She got it stuck between the ticket box and the door....

Johnny helped her lift it over the token box. He wished her luck getting it off....

Always the gentleman....

A client boarded. He wore an old captain's hat. He carried two canes. He was talking to his voices. Shut up, he told them. Don't touch my smokes.

He asked the woman if she'd mind moving two seats back, with her noisy brats. He couldn't hear his selves think.

She wearily got up, rolled the two-seater back a few feet, and sat down again.

He thought the world revolved around his ass-hole. The wind made him dizzy. It smelled bad. Johnny would gladly have moved to the next street car.

Would you mind shouting Ground Zero, when we come to it, he asked the driver in a whining voice.

I'll shout it right now, Johnny thought. Ground Zero, Ground Zero, Ground Zero!

Stop! Stop! The client screamed, thrashing his swagger sticks.

Johnny wondered if he'd really been shouting the stop. Or had the client suddenly changed his mind(s)? Maybe he'd read Johnny's!

The brakes squealed as the driver stomped his heavily shod hooves and the client bounced onto his ass, screaming, and flailing....

Like a beached coelacanth....

The fag frowned. The kiddies bawled.

Tecumseh, the driver resumed, announcing the next stop, named after the warrior Chief assassinated by British Intelligence (sic) for setting up t-pee with Laura Secord.

They paid a lotta dough creating the brand. They weren't gonna see it trashed by no squaw-man....

A stud got on. He had his bitch. She was ugly, squat, with bits of what appeared to be human bone embedded in tear-shaped glasses.

Her masculine better half compensated for their deficiencies as a couple. He had that Austin Powers look, less glasses. The slightly protuberant front molars made him resemble a beaver. His legs, however, were beautiful, and he was wearing short-shorts.

Johnny sat up straight to get a better view. The only straight thing about him. The hem of the short-shorts rose up when he sat down, exposing a stump-lot of hairy Dadanian thigh. While Johnny couldn't help staring, he tried not to be too obvious.

He failed at that too.

The stud noticed him. That wasn't his girlfriend. That was some hag he let stalk him. There was nothing the matter with his instincts, no sir.

He had maps. Johnny'd always wanted to join the Guides. He inculcated himself between them.

Young man, he lithped, are you lotht?

Suddenly the sun emerged from behind the loco No Frillies, resplendent as a white-suited man on stilts with a tennis-racket. In reality it was only their bus passing Foodtown, as it did forty times daily, before crossing the Dadanian Pacifier Railway tracks.

I'll say, the youth replied.

Thay what?

Johnny was like a fawn caught in the spotlight at the Rialto, gilding every follicle of the leg-show. He went dumb with arousal.

He didn't notice when a jock got on at the next stop, (hockey) stick cocked, awaiting the next fairy. He'd already dispatched a few Pucks.

Is this freak bothering you, he asked Adonis?

Without waiting for an answer, he slapped Johnny silly with his stick.

The hag didn't scream. The fag simpered. The schizo laughed. Inappropriate affect, all around.

Sprawled on the curb, Johnny studied the figures on the retreating platform, blinking through bloody tears as the beautiful youth rose behind his assailant, cupping a hand on his tight round ass.

It wasn't in the middle of nowhere.

Nowhere would have been better.

It was in the oldest quarter of Hogtown, buried alive among all-night varieties, apartment hotels, coffee shops, and ramshackle mansions with mansard roofs, homes of dead industrialists whose names haunted the loco music halls, Vinnie Massive's among them.

He passed the abandoned parking lot where Hogtown's first alienist had lived after retiring from the Asylum. His patients' descendants lived there still. The mansion had been torn down 50 years ago, or it would have been converted to a beer hall.

Johnny would have gone there to toast the man who gave up trying to cure madness, a hundred years ago....

He was ahead of his time.

Johnny came to Ground Zero's benighted street. The mansions at the end had been converted to taverns. The others had plywood in the windows and unpainted two-by-fours around the doors. Light shone through the cracks. Small groups of wasted young men and women loitered in the front yards, which were just parking lots. Johnny instinctively looked away.

The rest of the street felt recently de-institutionalized. That was partly because of Emile Durkheim House itself, which still looked faintly like a Victorian Boys' Academy, with a steep slate roof and gargoyles humping the rain spouts.

The House of Pain....

There were report cards in the attic, from school days a hundred years ago.

Johnny got an F in life skills....

Later, one of his house-mates indicated the trap door through which he'd crawled to find them. To Johnny they matched their own files in the basement. When a resident was discharged his file went downstairs, into the room off the smoky TV room. It eventually found its way into the attic, with the century-old report cards.

Or it was burnt....

There was a large exhibition ground to the south, bordered by more mansions, with an enormous greenhouse in the middle. All the mansions were doss-houses.

It was like approaching the sight of a bomb blast. The closer he got, the greater the devastation. Only the devastation was things. They were still alive, nominally. They were especially animated at the end of the month, on check day. Then the groups in the ruined front yards were larger, their activity more manic. The residents of Emile Durkheim House leaned on the gate at the foot of the sidewalk, like spectators at the Circus, to watch the dealing, the soliciting, fights breaking out as deals went bad. Women's voices were the loudest. When check day coincided with the full moon the buzzer never stopped. Dealers chased clients right onto the porch.

Emile Durkheim was next door to Satan. In the summertime the inmates of Satan House scaled the fence and stole the empties that Emile Durkheim's residents left on their patio. They could have walked up the sidewalk, but residents of Satan House didn't think like normals. It didn't seem worth it to Johnny, but he didn't live in Satan House.

Satan House was an enormous rectangular structure like a Technological Institute compared to Emile Durkheim's High School. Parts of it were surrounded by crenellated walls and fences. Residents evicted from Emile Durkheim refused to go there. If no other House was available, they slept in the park.

*****

Johnny was solicited half a dozen times coming up the street. He'd come early, in case there was trouble with traffic. He'd brought donations: kibble for the Emile Durkheim House cat, dishes for the residents to use in the bull-pen, used clothing. He'd stuffed it all into a green army-surplus paratrooper bag, that he slung over his shoulder. It was heavy, and he was tired.

He pressed the buzzer. Gladys asked him over the intercom for his number. Then she pressed the buzzer, releasing the lock. Johnny opened one of the heavy double-doors. There were bags of salt and shovels on the landing.

The dark-varnished stairs were slippery when wet.

Pioneers of Alienation

He smelled bleach, urine from the stalls off the bull-pen in the basement, soap from the laundry, cigarette smoke from the TV room, hops from the empties piled in boxes inside the door.

The office door was open, and the window like the pass-through in a cafeteria. He saw an old sink in the corner, cluttered with coffee mugs. On a round table beside the sink, a carton of donated chips had been opened and half-emptied. Beside the round table, on a small desk, a computer monitor was turned on. The screen-saver flashed a pair of enormous tits. In the corner, the TV was on too. Papers covered every flat surface, some piled high in stacks, others lying singly, like hastily opened mail. More peeled from wall surfaces not occupied by shelves of policy manuals or by dirty, pigeon-shat windows. Policy statements, he assumed. No one read them.

Johnny felt like a student late for class. He was early. Gladys wanted to watch Jerry Springer, but she didn't want Johnny to see her. She glanced angrily at her watch, then at the clock.

She said Johnny was half an hour early. There were rules about that. There was a copy of them right there, stapled to the wall.

Johnny saw Charlene in the back room, eating a sandwich. He didn't expect any support from her. He'd just hung his coat up on the rack and put away his donations in the cupboard, but he put the coat back on and went outside to walk around the crumbling block. He didn't bother to explain why he'd come early on New Year's Eve.

The first thing he learned was they weren't patients any more. They were clients, cases, subjects of novel-length biopics, incident reports, and FYI's, none of which was ever likely to be published.

What a loss to posterity of entertaining stories, what a waste of social workers' literary talents, that now would never be discovered, not even posthumously.

They were not around.

They were out dealing crack or other illegal substances, frequenting loco drop-ins, even working. Their employers never guessed they returned every night to a shelter. Most employers never speculated about such things anyway. Workers on the afternoon shift knew it was 4 o'clock, when they started pressing the buzzer to come in. They lined up.

Johnny's interview happened in the Program Room. It had tables, chairs, and a desktop computer that the guests signed up to use, twenty minutes a time. It had been the staff lounge. The interviewer was Citizen Hearse, Director and Czar of Shelters and Homelessness, which included, besides Emile Durkheim, Oakridge and Yucca Flats.

Swell resorts!

Citizen Hearse suffered from migraine. His assistant, Margaret Dumont, looked uncomfortable.

They asked Johnny questions and told him how they routinely dispensed powerful psychotropic drugs, three or four times daily, to scores of schizophrenic clients.

Margaret Dumont said compliance was a condition of residency.

Citizen Hearse described how some guests, if they missed just one dose, escalated. Sleeplessness, more delusions than ever, destruction of personal property, even most treasured possessions.

Others went AWOL, missed two weeks' worth of meds, and returned, as good as ever....

Johnny has a B.A. in TELEVISION STUDIES from the U of T (for TITS) - which really comes in HANDY when you're monitoring people's MEDS, because when you're not SLEEPING you can at least read a PHOTOPLAY MAGAZINE....

Don't worry. You'll always know (ie., will have known?) when somebody's MEDS need ADJUSTMENT. After throwing his most treasured possesions over the balcony (into the yard of the condo development next store - take THAT you PHILISTINES), NIGEL lapses into a COMA.

Yup, needed an ADJUSTMENT all right. (Back in the STAFF ROOM, Johnny turns another page - so to speak - DAMN she's HOT!)

$CAMH (State Capitalists ADVANCING Mental Hell) is the BIGGEST FUCKING PUSHER of dangerous, psychotropic drugs in DADANIA, but the CRUMMIEST BACK-ALLEY PARKDALE PUSHER does BETTER QUALITY CONTROL & MONITORING - at least he does SOME MONITORING, because if HIS client gets SICK, the LITTLE PARKDALE PUSHER gets his HEAD BASHED IN....

$CAMH gets another $30,000,000 to do another pointless research project on the SEMIOTICS OF POSTHUMOUS CARE, Removing Stigma from CONFLICT OF INTEREST WITH CORPORATE CLIENTS (Eli LILLY, McCAIN, THOMPSON, BELL HELL-PHONE, BEAMISH, LABATT, etc, etc....) while their PROPAGANDA MINISTER declares a NEW ERA for Mental Hell (what? - the 4th REICH?) every time they FUCKING SCORE....

Meanwhile, STATE CAPITALIST "researchers" actively promote Pfizer's (latest POISON) CHAMPIX in goody-goody anti-smoking campaigns sponsored by the DRUG CARTEL.

It's NEVER TOO LATE -
to be a STATE CAPITALIST GUINEA PIG
Just - DON'T GET "DEPRESSED"
(ie., SUICICAL)

So why didn't this RESEARCH reveal these deadly SIDE-EFFECTS? If it DID, WHY are STATE CAPITALISTS still RECRUITING? Some "RESEARCHERS" wind up in JAIL. Why not NOW?

Thing Street Asylum

Where's the DRUG MONITORING? NOT at $CAMH! What KIND OF "HOSPITAL" is THIS? I think we know - The NONE OF IT'S KIND HOSPITAL....

Margaret Dumont looked dismayed. She couldn't figure it out.

It's as easy to sing as saying your A B C's....

She never could....

Johnny wanted to tell her the only difference between Emile Durkheim and Handy House, was there you didn't have to take your meds. They still did, though.

Ms. Dumont babbled on about how, apart from the prescribed meds, they clandestinely bought and sold contraband cigs, to which all the residents were passionately addicted. They plowed the profits back into shaving supplies and under-arm deodorant. Everyone who knew the residents marveled what a low priority hygiene was, below smoking..

Then they played "simulations," to see what his life-skills were.

If he had any....

*****

He did better at simulations after he got real-life material.

If, for example, a nice matronly manager asked him how he dealt with such-and-such a crisis, he could usually remember one almost like it. It wasn't so much a matter of imagining what he'd do, as remembering what he'd done.

For example, a client suddenly collapses. What do you do?

Catch him before he hits the floor, if you're lucky.

It was 5 o'clock at Yucca Flats, just 15 minutes till supper which, this being Friday, was fish. There were 20 clients already gathered in the TV/dining room. There was a movie on the VCR, but they'd seen it before. They were hungry.

A resident approached Johnny, just inside the dining room door, and told him that the church group was downstairs, outside the electric door. They were distributing hot food. It was stew.

Johnny announced it.

The residents hated fish, so there was soon a group of men clattering downstairs.

He announced it in the dorm too. He woke things up, to tell them. Otherwise, they'd complain, nobody'd told them.

On his way out of the dorm, the resident ahead of him weaved and stumbled. Johnny followed him downstairs, the man weaving so much other residents had difficulty going up. Near the foot of the stairs the man collapsed, and would have injured himself, but Johnny caught him.

He helped him to sit down on a step against the wall.

He asked him if he'd been taking drugs.

He said he'd taken all his seizure medication.

One of the man's friends saw what was happening, and joined them. Johnny asked him to sit beside the man while he went upstairs.

He told the supervisor, who called emergency services. She handed Johnny a cell-phone and sent him downstairs to talk to the resident while she gathered what information they had about his medication.

The man's friend was sitting with his arm around him, against the wall under an agitprop poster of a beaming Margaret Dumont distributing hot food to a famished-looking derelict. At least he thought it was hot.

The friend got up when he saw Johnny coming with the phone. Johnny took his place. The phone rang. It was emergency services.

Was the man conscious?

Johnny said yes.

Was there any indication that he'd been taking drugs?

He said he'd taken all his seizure medication.

Was it a suicide attempt?

He said he didn't want to live in the shelter any more. He wanted to die.

Looks like it....

The woman from emergency services said keep the client upright, keep talking to him, keep him conscious. The team would be there in a few minutes.

The man's friend went upstairs to talk to the supervisor. Johnny sat beside him. He said hang on, help was coming.

Pioneers of Alienation

He didn't want help. Jilted by his boyhood friend from private school, kicked out of his basement apartment by his brother, fired by the thrift store after 20 years in the men's shoes department....

He wanted to die.

A resident paused on his way upstairs, his paper plate in his hand.

Johnny told him, keep moving. The last thing they needed was a bottle-neck in the stairwell, a fight.

Don't stand there gawking.

I'm not!

Don't argue, either. Keep moving.

The man on the stairs slumped over, losing consciousness just as the supervisor came down with his file.

Bruce!

He didn't recognize him.

The next moment the door opened and Johnny saw the ambulance parked in front of the church van, two white-coated goons striding towards them....

*****

A plaque screwed into the brick wall of Yucca Flats commemorated the delivery of a paper one hundred years ago on that very spot by Sir Sanford Flemming.

There was just a house on the corner.

In his paper Sir Sanford advocated the establishment of Standard Time.

How appropriate.

The shelter was governed by time.

The exhausted night staff did wake-up calls from 4 till 7:30. The big coffee urns were plugged in at 5:30, put out at 6:30. Breakfast was served at 8:30. Last call was at 9:30. Starting at 9:45, at least on week-days, Johnny had to warn the residents still sleeping that they had to be up and at least on the way out of the dorm at 10. Lunch was at 12:15, supper at 5:15, snack at 10. Lights went off in the dorms at 11. Curfew was at 12:30. Bed-check was at 12:45, and 4. The only exceptions were Christmas and New Year's Eve.

It was a study in inner-city contrasts. A city-owned building that resembled the wing of a 1940s mental hospital. Effectively, it was.

It had been a tax office, where things paid parking tickets. Time, again!

There was an angel (a figure of Justice?) above the Latin motto over the cryptic door. Beside the door, a buzzer. Above the door, a camera....

For the little black and white TV....

Things buzzed to be admitted. When not immediately recognized, they gave a bed number. Those without a number were turned away, or referred to the Sally Anne around the corner.

One ascended several flights of stairs before entering the shelter proper.

The basement and first floor were abandoned, though not empty. Staff occasionally heard the alarm sound, like an air-raid toxin, activated by someone opening the downstairs door. Residents had discovered the stairs to the rarely used side door. It was accessed through the men's dorm, down a hallway where they stored garbage. Off limits.

There were squatters in the basement. Staff found food containers, blankets, even I.D.

When he went out for coffee at Tim Horton's in the morning he lined up with bankers, hospital workers, ambulance drivers, shelter residents, street things, tour groups, and survivors talking to their voices.

*****

Nobody in the shelter knew Latin, and Johnny had forgotten his schooling, but there was a rumor bruited about the downtown corridor that the English translation of the motto was Garbage In, Garbage Out.

*****

Johnny smelled dirty feet and ass-holes. He ascended several flights of stairs and turned a few corners to reach the main floor of Yucca Flats, where the shelter was. The first thing he saw at the top of the stairs was a copy of the Policy Statement, enlarged, laminated, and bolted to the beige-painted wall.

It was a synthesis of the Magna Carta, the Declaration of Independence, and the Universal Bill of Human Rights.

It was written by the AEC, in collaboration with Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre.

To the right was the little office, to the left the TV room, formerly the TV/smoking room, from which he heard the gun-shots of a cop movie.

In the office were two desks put together at right angles, a monitor showing the front door, a computer behind the desks, chairs, and filing cabinets. The supervisor sat at the desk facing the door, one front-line worker at the desk facing the monitor, and one at the computer. Behind the office was a claustrophobic, windowless, bug-infested little room where they were supposed to sleep during their mandatory hour-long break. No one did.

The TV/smoking room occupied the south-west corner of the building. It was furnished with eight large tables, 60 stackable chairs, and metal benches along two walls. There was an enormous TV set against the west wall, and in the north-west corner a shelf with a microwave. The microwave was usually broken, because of a resident getting stoned and cooking a coke spoon inside it. The south and west walls had large windows which the residents annoyed Citizen Hearse by opening year-round, wasting the heat in the winter, the air-conditioning in the summer. Occasionally a window toppled out of its frame, forcing the residents below to evacuate their table. The northern wall was broken by the pass-through into the kitchen, which ran parallel to the TV room.

Before the City banned smoking, they used coffee cans as ashtrays. After cleaning they were emptied and neatly lined up on the shelf in the corner. Residents brought them to their tables as needed. Residents who were broke and out of cigarettes would rummage through them, looking for large butts. That was why Citizen Hearse wanted them emptied at least once a day, which happened at night, when Johnny worked. Except at meal times, and often then, the tables were also littered with newspapers, paper cups, rolling papers, playing cards, and laundry.

The men's dorm occupied the rest of the floor, another backwards L, the foot of which extended from the office to the north wall of the building, and the back of which reached the wall of the women's dorm. Because the men's dorm had two doors, one by the office and one down a short hallway past the TV room, when he did a round he literally walked around the floor. In the middle was the men's washroom, with two toilets, two urinals, three sinks, three shower stalls. After every round he'd pause and sniff at the door of the washroom, trying to isolate the smell of crack from the smell of other human waste.

There were a few smaller rooms, here and there. To the left of the TV room was the door to the nurse's room. To the left of the nurse's room, the women's small bathroom, where Johnny once caught a couple of new intakes smoking crack at 3 A.M. To the right of the TV room, past the kitchen door, always kept locked, were storage rooms full of green garbage bags, residents' belongings, abandoned and forgotten stuff from clothing banks, destined for the curb.

*****

Yucca Flats was routinely staffed by two drones, although there were supposed to be at least three (the supervisor, and two front-line workers). These might be two women at night, when most residents were male and full occupancy was 70. The occupancy was never below 60. The shelter was always full.

Crises were common. A crisis could be a fight, a physical assault, a suicide attempt, a drug overdose, a violent psychotic episode, a fire alarm, a bomb scare.

If the crisis was a simple fight, one worker would attend each of the two residents. If it was anything else, one worker dealt with the resident worst affected and one with the others. The supervisor would call 911 and maintain the security of the building by monitoring the electric front door over closed-circuit TV.

Only residents and prospective residents were supposed to be buzzed into the building. Things with service restrictions for serious things like assault and harassment were not allowed in. Legitimate residents entering the building might inadvertently admit these unwelcome guests, but it was the job of staff to prevent this by monitoring the door.

The arithmetic was simple. During a crisis, with only two workers on duty, anyone could enter the shelter. Staff wouldn't know, until they spotted the intruder during a round or the intruder got himself noticed. The usual way was by causing an incident.

Johnny knew what could happen.

Once, after bed check, a resident approached him at the door of the darkened ward, and whispered. An intruder was creeping from bunk to bunk, looking for someone. Johnny entered the ward and went to the bunk where he heard whispering.

He saw a man's figure silhouetted against the windows.

He told him to go to the office.

The man said no, he was looking for someone, who owed him money.

Johnny said, It's after curfew. He was disturbing everybody.

More silhouettes loomed against the windows, illuminated by street-lamps. They swore, and told him what Johnny'd just told him, Go to the office.

The man stumbled into the hall, whispering the name of the man who owed him money.

I'm sorry, Johnny heard him apologizing to a worker. The worker wouldn't tell him whether the man was a resident.

It was confidential.

Then how about a bed, the man asked?

We're full. All you can do is leave a message.

By then they were at the top of the stairs. The man paused, shrugged, and went downstairs.

Johnny listened for the sound of the heavy door. It opened and shut. The man was gone, but everyone was awake. Mistakes like that cost scores of residents their sleep, and interrupted their reading....

Then a female resident complained, and the same thing happened in the women's dorm. It was the girlfriend. There was a woman on duty that night, who accompanied hm into the women's dorm, first slapping the outer door and shouting, Man on!

Only Johnny....

They shone their flashlights on a figure in one of the two small bedrooms.

Come to the office....

She gave them the name of someone, who owed her money....

They could take a message.

She said, Fuck! She wanted the money. She turned, and descended too. The heavy door opened, and shut.

She rang the buzzer at 10 minute intervals. They wouldn't tell her anything. It was confidential. At sunrise they felt tired, so they took the easy way out. They lied....

They hadn't seen him all week.

*****

At Oakridge workers were happily applying service restrictions to a number of residents. They were kicking them out.

Johnny noticed an African guy who'd worked the night before and someone he'd never seen before but heard about.

The joker wanted to see the residents' faces when he did bed-check, wandering around the dorm with his little flashlight, checking off the names on the bed-list attached to his clipboard. He asked each resident to show him his face.

He wanted to eye-ball them.

The African rolled his eyes indicating it had been a stressful night. He didn't like to do bed-check that way, especially when there were only two things on duty.

When the joker went outside to smoke a cigarette, the African explained to the colleague who'd just come on duty that a female resident had assaulted one of her dorm-mates with a curling iron. He'd witnessed it, doing the 4 A.M. check.

She was the first on their list.

The second was a guy whom Johnny'd seen staggering around the shelter, obviously over-medicating himself. He'd been harassing the merchants on either side of Oakridge. Occasionally he smoked crack in the stalls. Usually another resident would snitch. Residents generally hated it when other residents smoked crack on the premises. They agreed, the shelter should be a neutral zone. They wanted its neutrality enforced.

Johnny wondered how they were going to give them the bum's rush. Management had fired all the experienced supervisors, and Ann Savage wasn't used to working on her own. She was just sitting around, unconsciously waiting for Citizen Hearse, or his latest assistant, Messalina, to arrive, and tell her what to do.

They did the man first, to get him out of the way so they could deal with the woman seperately. Women always gave them the most trouble, even other women agreed.

Miss Savage especially.

Danny had been up all night, and bothering the loco merchants all morning. He'd made a scene in a dollar store, because they wouldn't give him credit. He'd complained about lunch, and finally gone back to bed, because of the intense heat. They let him.

Ann Savage had Rusty bring him a message.

Come to the office....

Rusty walked down the corridor, past the lockers and the spacious washrooms of the former nightclub. He entered the men's dorm, thinking how nice it must have been as the Grand Ballroom.

The men had extinguished the ugly neon lights because of the heat. The large arched window let daylight in. He walked between rows of bunks to a single bed by the wall. He checked the number on the headboard, to be sure.

Danny had stripped to his shorts and sprinkled himself, his bed, and the surrounding floor with talcum powder. Rusty tapped his pillow, till he got his attention. Danny peered up at him, sheepishly.

Rusty gently asked him to get dressed, and come to the office.

What about?

Miss Savage wanted to talk to him.

Then Miss Savage went into the women's dorm, to tell Anna.

Danny came to the office fully dressed, wearing his prized aviator sunglasses.

Ann Savage listed his offenses, reading from the report she was writing. He'd been non-compliant, which was a technical-sounding phrase for a nuisance. He'd also been very needy, spending the greater part of one night shift a few weeks ago, giving Rusty and his colleague all his possessions, which consisted mainly of a thick, messy dossier

and a few previewed DVDs. He was compiling the dossier for a submission he intended to make to Citizen Hearse, recounting the abuses he'd suffered in his psychomes and shelters, especially Oakridge.

He'd been more seriously non-compliant with his meds, for the prescribed ones substituting the street drugs that he smoked in the stalls of the spacious washroom, that had doubtless been used that way at least since nightclub days in the 30s.

He denied everything.

Therefore, Ann Savage continued inexorably, he was being restricted for 3 weeks, according to the Standards and Company Policy (copies of which were stapled to the wall).

He asked (sarcastically) if that was all. He said he intended to make an appeal. He would put it in his submission.

Johnny handed him one of their standardized forms.

Danny thanked him. He wondered if now they were just going to throw him out into the street.

Miss Savage assured him, he'd get a referral. Meanwhile he had half an hour to get his shit together and beat it. Rusty would help him pack.

Danny marched out of the office, Rusty following with a green garbage bag.

Let's get your stuff off your bed, Rusty suggested.

You're not touching my stuff, Danny threatened.

All right, do it yourself. I'll hold the bag.

I don't want your fucking bag.

He stuffed the clothes that he'd scattered around and under his bed into a duffel bag, dragged an enormous suitcase on casters out from under the bed and wheeled it out of the dorm to one of the lockers. The locker was packed tight with his belongings. He slowly began to remove them, refold them, and place them in the suitcase. When Rusty tried to help, he swore at him and restrained himself with difficulty from hitting him. He was livid.

Victoria saw what was happening and demanded why. Johnny wasn't allowed to say, so he just muttered something about confidentiality.

She said, she was going with Danny.

Messalina finally arrived, and informed Danny that staff had the right to touch his belongings whenever they wanted, especially when they were evicting him.

Rusty knew they still had Amanda to deal with, so he ignored his objections, and dumped armfuls of stuff into the suitcase. With the suitcase in his hand and the duffel bag slung over his shoulder, he shepherded the man out the door and onto the blazing hot sidewalk. He deposited the bags beside him. He said he'd give him his referral, shortly.

Miss Savage reminded Rusty to get Danny's psychotropic meds. The pink dosette, in the green cabinet.

There was no sign of Amanda. They were worried about a scene.

Rusty obediently followed Miss Savage into the women's dorm and crouched behind her while she explained her predicament, as she saw it.

She'd been accused of harassment by a member of the staff, and now she had to leave for a month, depending on her appeal. If she made a lot of trouble, it would hurt her appeal. Her best strategy was to go now, and appeal the decision later.

They handed her another of their convenient, standardized forms.

She said they weren't touching her stuff.

After consulting with the manager, Johnny told her that if she wasn't off the property in 30 minutes, they'd call the cops. If that went into their report, it would ruin her appeal.

Amanda was impressed, but they still weren't touching her stuff. She'd take a small bag with her, and her friends would pack her things.

Meanwhile the resident who'd allegedly been assaulted entered the dorm.

It was Victoria!

Amanda approached her, embraced her, begged her to tell them they'd only been fooling around. She started to ball.

Rusty told Amanda she now had 25 minutes.

Rusty returned to the office where Messalina was laughing about everything with the housing worker.

In her scarlet cocktail dress Messalina alternately smoked outside with the residents he'd just evicted or leaned over him in the office as he wrote up the report. She regarded him like a fish, with a mixture of intense hostility and blank indifference. Rusty thought she was waiting for him to make a mistake. She certainly wasn't offering him moral support.

Osama arrived to work the next shift. He offered to help in front of Messalina, after all the dirty work was done.

Messalina told Johnny to claim an extra hour, because he'd worked his break and not gone home early, as was the custom. Osama claimed an extra hour too, although he routinely took his break and left early. Today, he stole two hours' pay.

Rusty'd nearly finished his report, before he remembered Danny's meds. He'd forgotten all about them, in the pink dosette in the green cabinet. He ran with them to the front door, and handed them to Danny. Danny was smoking with a little group of supporters. He took it sullenly.

Victoria rushed past him at the door. She had a knapsack, like she intended to live with Danny, on the street.

She glared at Rusty. It was his fault.

Rusty returned to the office, and started to read his report aloud. Messalina gathered the women, to mock the way he accompanied his text with his hands, like a fag conductor. Homos were so literary.

Suddenly they looked up, hearing a noise like rain, pelting the round windows of the former ticket booth, of the former night-club.

Danny's meds! The 21st century equivalent of emptying the dregs of his chamber pot in their faces.

*****

On the corner of Thing and Beastly....
It met the criteria of the Historical Board: design, association, value.
Semi-engaged, flanking columns....
Flat-headed openings....
Well-developed. Buff....
Craft! Style!
Had a history, too....
Greco-Roman ways!
Mirror image of the one on the next corner, and the next, all the way to the Lake....
Don't put negative constructions on it, but....
It was like a string of whores....
Worth celebrating, boys and girls....
Edwardian Classicism!
Always plenty of (feet and) ass....

*****

Emile Durkheim House was Handy House all over again.

*****

Deane welcomed him. He was the first man, like Adam. Everyone else a figure.

*****

He remembered following him, up dark-varnished stairs, to his third floor room. Deane had a great ass, but very bad feet. They bothered him a lot.

*****

He remembered his sense of humor. Deane paused at a window in the rear stairwell and picked up a baggie that had probably contained a cookie. Crack cocaine, he muttered.

*****

He remembered sitting in the front parlor while Deane slowly rolled his left pant-leg up over the brace in order to adjust it.

*****

Deane said Johnny ought to get a fag doctor.
What? He must be kidding!
No, they existed. He insisted. He had one.
Brilliant! That was the solution.
Imagine! He'd confess. He'd admit he was a faggot, and not immediately be asked to get an AIDS Test.

Thing Street Asylum

*****

Porko'd set him up with his present quack. Butt-ugly NAZI bitch. Trixie Zane. They wanted her in Berilin. Nazism was a crime, in Germany....

He demanded at their Meet and Greet. Do you think all fags have AIDS?

Trixie replied, choosing her words. Some of us even think JOHNNY has AIDS....

She wanted to CURE him, before he polluted THING STREET.

He couldn't believe she said that. Yeah, he wanted a new doctor. A FAG ONE!

*****

After 20 years without a visit to the doctor, they gave him Fu Manchu.

Some issues arose from that intervention.

The focus of the interrogation was sex'n drugs. Considering his age and life-style, it should have been diet.

Johnny hated to go to the doctor.

He got up at 7:30 for a 10:00 appointment. To mentally prepare. He showered the previous night, and laid out boxers, walking shorts, T-shirt, socks. He didn't want to burden his mind with nerve-wracking decisions about what to wear, when it was already over-taxed by thoughts of the doctor.

He waited till 9:30 to go, because he knew the doctors in their new red brick and concrete Branch Asylum at the end of Thing Street didn't didn't keep strict hours, although they demanded that their client/patients be punctual.

He had to check-in at the right time. They'd get around to "servicing" him. Eventually....

He was late anyway, because of the road-work. Drs. Praetorius and Eel were transforming Thing Street into a new kind of hospital, an urban village, a gated condo community.

New Berchtesgaden!

They'd finally solved he problem of chronic insanity and consequent low prestige.

They'd get rid of MAD PEOPLE.

They'd pander to the upper middle-class patrons of the over-priced galleries and art-bars that had sprung up in the wake of wholesale condo-ization. They'd coin new disorders for them in the DSMV Ultra Edition that was in press even now.

They were going to change the old acronym of Thing Street from CAMH (for Crazy-Assed Mad-House) to $CAMH (for Shopping-Centres and Model-Homes).

The entire Transforming Lives campaign was especially offensive in the historical context of all the self-righteous TRANSFORMERS who'd invariably turned out to be frauds and, more often than not, sadistic monsters.

They LOVED it....

In that rarefied milieu of crackpots, poseurs, and fakes, they were right at home.

After the beefy cops held him up for the bull-dozers, he was late anyway.

At Fort Meds junkies dozed fitfully in thick-upholstered arm-chairs that looked like they'd been plundered from the Queen Mary. A grey-haired man with a pony tail and a lot of tatoos drifted over to the counter. He waited, till a Medical Secretary asked in a chipper voice if she could help him. Johnny couldn't hear what he said.

He was beginning to catch cold, under the vent in the ocean-liner chair. A nervous, black-haired man sat down in an adjacent deck chair, his "worker" beside him. The nervous client wore black denims. The "worker" wore shorts, sandals,T-shirt, and half-glasses. Johnny thought he was gay. It took one to know one, and he was one. They both were.

At 10:20, 5 minutes past the real start time, Johnny walked up to the counter and told the Medical Secretary he was leaving. He'd only come for his test results, anyway. He assumed if he had cancer, they'd let him know.

Be patient (fag!), said Jah Lo See.

Daughter of Fu Manchu!

He figured his doctor was Chinese. He'd been watching a young slant strolling around with hand soap, rolls of gauze, pack of needles, condoms.

Sexual contacts? He noted his tight jeans and starched cuffs.

He was almost relieved when the doctor called his name.

Pioneers of Alienation

Boy!

He saw an old coolie, awaiting him down the hall. He wasn't effete at all. He radiated the power of MAINLAND CHINA!
His friends, out of courtesy, called him DOCTOR....

He began by observing that their relationship seemed to have got off with a bad start.
He didn't see anyone else, so he assumed he meant Fort Medz.
Johnny said he didn't enjoy waiting. It wasn't ANTI-OPPRESSIVE.
He apologized profusely. Most regrettable but, given the nature of the population, entirely unavoidable.
Johnny begged to remind him. He wasn't doctoring a population. He was doctoring him, an individual. The one and only, Johnny Boy.

He requested him to please (shut up and) remove his shirt and shorts, and put on this gown made out of dinner napkins.

After expatiating on the perfidy of the white race, he enquired about the sexual orientation, number, and gender of Johnny's conquests.
Johnny wondered. What was the gender and sexual orientation of ZERO. That was how many contacts he'd had....
Fu Mannchu begged him to please not answer a question with a question.
Johnny complied. He answered as candidly, and honestly, as he could. Yes, he was gay, and no, he had not had any sexual contacts.

He was Virgin Queen. Of Thing Street!

All right, he said. But he didn't believe him, even after he explained that he'd had a twenty year relationship with an Anglican divinity student. No fucking up the ass. Just the head.
The doctor said it sounded rather.... He groped for the word....
Pining?
Till he jerked off.
Race suicide, he spat!

Toward the end of the interview, Fu Manchu excused himself and left the room, to laugh.

He returned with a number of forms for blood work.

Fu Manchu mumbled something about anonymity.
Johnny murmured about virginity.
It didn't matter, neither existed. For Fu Manchu!

He said Johnny doubtless had experienced puncture wounds, needle stabs.
Johnny realized, too late. He was referring him for an AIDS TEST!
He doubted his virginity, very much!
He shoved the forms in Johnny's hands, and directed him to the secret laboratory on Rancidvale.
Go, chop chop!

He said Johnny initiated it himself! Liar!
He thought it was just another brain scan. To see what made him tick.

He saw where the great man had scrawled sex with man.

Wasn't being asked to undergo H.I.V. testing, solely on the basis of being a fag, a nancy, a fruit, a molly, in other words, gay, or, formerly, homosexual, arguably an instance of homophobia?
Since, he trusted, it was NOT the policy of Fort Medz to automatically test all gay things for AIDS, wasn't it not unreasonable to further suspect that the Hon. Dr. Fu Manchu was proceeding on the basis of certain false assumptions about the white race, namely that they were FAGS?
Didn't he know? Being gay was an orientation, not a bad kind of sexual behavior, running around, screwing your neighbors down the hall at Emile Durkheim House.
Why, theoretically, it wasn't impossible to be GAY and totally CHASTE. Or, indeed, utterly inconceivable, that one could be chaste, and STRAIGHT!

Johnny thought he knew something about these matters, even if he hadn't had any sex. But hadn't he written a pioneering study of the meanings of homosexuality in 18th-century texts, Swords in Myrtle Dress'd, published years ago by a small university press in the United States. You could even verify it, on the world-wide web.

He felt he should bring this to someone's attention, since treatment should be evidence-based, on the the individual, not on faulty generalizations and stereotypes.

Well....

Let's see if you can sing this while you spell....

He felt something cold and wet.

*****

Stuff it in! Cram it in!

*****

Fu Manchu had his finger up his ass.

Prostate BIG, he said.

His friends out of courtesy called him DOCTOR (or so he thought)....

*****

Johnny watched Trixie Zane stroll past the House, while he sold junk on the grass.

Other social workers sneered at his junk. They wouldn't venture inside the chain-link fence. They were cowardly, but mainly cheap.

At least she wasn't cowardly.

Her arms full of pamphlets, she strolled up the sidewalk, on her way to Mr. Usually. Mr. Usually was her client, and she made house calls.

Johnny leaned as hard as he dared against Emile Durkheim's rotten railing, to let her by. She smiled beatifically, as workers do. The world was her client, and her case.

She herself, was a piece of work.

She pressed the second floor buzzer.

Omar Usually enjoyed many showers daily, after each of which he liberally applied expensive cologne, judging by the atomizers in his trash.

Johnny enjoyed picking through Thing Street offal. No one was what he was supposed to be. Omar was supposed to be on welfare, subsisting on 500 dollars a month.

Omar Usually opened mail addressed to someone with an African version of Johnny's surname. The cable company called to connect high-speed Internet for Johnny Something-or-other.

It was identity theft.

Omar was supposed to be unemployed, but he usually danced downstairs in a broad-brimmed pink fedora and fat designer jeans, his jewelry rattling.

Johnny confronted him about the mail, accusing him of fraud. After denying everything, he nearly fainted staggering across the boulevard to the idling jeep full of over-dressed bucks. Johnny saw it every night, camouflaged in the bushes behind the housing project next door.

The project was mainly inhabited by white survivor trash like the nut who left him a Christmas card every year, inscribed, from your cell-mate, in the Virtual Asylum.

Omar had it all. A day pas with special privileges, a foxy social-working whore with great tits, etc.

Besides Omar's empty perfume vials, Johnny found wine and liquor bottles, and shopping bags from the finest Hogtown boutiques in his garbage.

Omar wasn't what he seemed, and he seemed different things to different things, but garbage still was trash.

Johnny hoped she wouldn't stay. Social workers made him nervous.

One Saturday morning Omar seemed to shower longer than usually. Johnny had to pee, so he rapped on the door. She answered. He'd never seen her in Omar's bathrobe before, but he recognized her, even without a bunch of pamphlets in her arms.

He recognized her later, doing her grand rounds. She was Porko's WORKER then.

Pioneers of Alienation

*****

Trixie was an ACTOR. She'd had bit parts in the movies. Ted had her on BETA. He threw fortnightly parties for the volunteers. They drank beer and smoked up in his bug-infested apartment, applauding Trixie's death spasms in Satan's Sophomores.

She could get a job whenever she wanted in Hollywood. It wasn't because they wanted her car. She didn't have one.

Thomas A. Kempis had been her lover. Before hers, he'd been Jah Lo See's. Porko figured he'd been everybody's, and nobody's....

Jah Lo See said, he wasn't very nice....

Porko watched him sitting in the first pew with his palms out, like things who sat too close to the television. Like Trixie Zane.

Trixie Zane and Thomas A. Kempis broke up that spring, after Tommy had a big fist-fight with Jah Lo See outside the drop-in. They stopped traffic....

Trixie became Porko's floozy.

Johnny knew something had happened when Porko told him to pass by after work. When Johnny rang the penthouse, Porko didn't answer.

He didn't answer for a week.

Porko and Trixie Zane hung out in Coffeeslimes and Handy Havens. Trixie had coffee, Porko hot chocolate.

Porko would talk to other patrons who tried to make conversation, but Trixie would tell them to fuck off.

Porko finally phoned.

He had an announcement.

Trixie Zane was moving into Emile Durkheim House.

*****

Johnny said, he didn't want anything to do with her....

He especially didn't want her hanging around his door, while they were screwing....

Porko said never fear, they'd fuck when she was out....

Johnny said, he only seemed to care about Trixie....

Porko said he didn't care about anybody, so long as she put a bat beside her door....

Johnny heard her come home. She wanted everyone to hear, and notice what a bright, cheerful, young thing she was. Unfortunately there wasn't anyone listening, except Johnny, who didn't believe her act.

If she'd started raving, he'd have concluded only that she was schizophrenic.

She was talking to her cats. She spoke to Cherry Blossom and Little Passion Fruit, and spoke for them too.

She used a girlish voice.

She must have been a bad actor, because she never stopped.

Johnny put a bat beside his door.

*****

Johnny said Trixie'd go to Rehab all week, and by the weekend she'd be back on Thing Street, buying pot.

Porko said no, they'd test her, and she'd get thrown out. She didn't want to get thrown out, because it was posh. There was free cable TV, Internet, anything you wanted to eat. It was Vegas, without gambling or booze.

Federico Fellini said it sure wasn't Rehab, if they let you out on weekends.

Johnny imagined Trixie arriving at Rehab, in her Isotta Fraschini, liveried Rehab flunkies opening the door, escorting her up red-carpeted stairs, into a candlelit lobby....

TV celebrities in evening gowns and tuxedos recognized her, the star of Satan's Sophomores....

They joined her for coffee and liqueurs, after a private screening in the TV room.

Rehab was in a good neighborhood, nestled among the better, more exclusive hospitals. It was moving into a mall on the grounds of the old asylum....

With the old Thing Street things at least had SOMEWHERE to go. They obviously wouldn't, after the site was TRANSFORMED....

Into a shopping centre....

For Hipsters....

Clients would go the way of patients the way of lunatics the way of....

Homeless things....

Out of sight....

Thing Street Asylum

Disappeared....
In a thousand Emile Durkheims....

NOWHERE....

Not Constantinople....

*****

Johnny heard about Porko's floozies in the context of the drop-in where he volunteered. Porko drove the van to pick up the food on Tuesday, and distributed it on Wednesday.

Once Porko went to the drop-in on Thursday. Ted, Jah Lo See, and Joline were working.

Ted hadn't had a real job in 20 years. Jah Lo See was wearing her pharmacist's smock. Joline was a woman in her thirties. Porko distributed the muffins he'd baked that morning and showed them the material he'd chosen for drapes.

He wondered if anyone knew how to prime a sewing machine.

Joline looked at him strangely, frowned, and lost control.

What was he? Homosexual?

Jah Lo See smiled. Her meds changed lives. She told Porko to leave the sewing-machine. She'd deliver it tomorrow.

Joline marched into the store room, and slammed the door.

Jah Lo See visited Porko at Emile Durkheim House. She did a great job, priming his sewing-machine.

*****

Porko replaced the supervisor next Thursday.

Joline gave a single man as much as a family. When Porko intervened she accused him of being unchristian, marched into the store-room, and emerged with the food for Friday.

Porko told her to put it back, or he'd fire her.

Jah Lo See supported him. He was the supervisor. Do as you're told.

Joline started screaming. She demanded to know what he was.

What kind of supervisor liked to bake and sew?

Porko shouted. Shut up (bitch). Put it back!

She slammed the store-room door. Porko's knapsack was inside, with the keys.

Joline continued out the front door, to the church office to complain. Porko followed behind her to get the spare keys.

Joline balled and shrieked. Stop following me!

A flight of stairs, and a ramp for the handicapped, led up to the vestibule between the church and the row of connected houses where the Fathers lived, in luxury.

Porko and Johnny used to lower their voices and joke when they passed by. They wondered who was away, at the Love Shack tonight.

They'd wave in the dark, at the illuminated dormers.

Inside the vestibule was a little wicket, behind which a pale seminarian or a white-haired crone sat, in the little office. Porko went there to get the key for the van, if they'd let him have it. If someone new was on duty, and none of the Fathers was around, he'd have to bring a note. The van was the jurisdiction of Father Tom, but in lieu of him Brother Torquemado would do. Brother Torquemado controlled other things too.

Inside the vestibule there were a few chairs arranged around a glass casket displaying pamphlets about Saint Phillip Neri, the founder of the Oratorians.

At the wicket, in the vestibule with advertisements for the Complete Works of St. Phillip Neri, Porko interrupted Joline's litany to get the spare keys from the white-haired crone.

He didn't stay to find out from Brother Torquemado what happened.

*****

Federico Fellini and Porko loitered outside the Thing Street entrance. Fellini had been a barber, till it happened. Somebody threw a spittoon at him, or he leaned too far into the sterilizer one morning, getting the tweezers.

Porko's little Pomeranian shivered beside him on a leash. Fellini's floozy huddled on the steps, against one of the concrete columns, to the left of Edwardian Classicism....

Pioneers of Alienation

Johnny waved at them through Deborah's scratches. Deborah had lived in Fellini's, till crack made her loud and crazy.

Crack drove her out of her mind, then out of her room....

Nothing could drive her off Thing Street....

Johnny circled the newel post, and descended the half-flight of stairs to the mailboxes, intending to enter through the inner door the basement labyrinth that led into the Thing Street side of the building and through a second set of doors onto Thing Street itself. Porko rapped on the whore-scratched glass. He waved at Johnny.

They had news.

They'd just been fired from the food-bank, by the Fathers' latest poster-boy.

They were riding in the back of the Fathers' dilapidated van when Thomas A. Kempis escalated. They'd cracked open a $.50 box of stale cookies to have with their coffee.

He accused them of stealing from the poor.

They said they were the poor.

He said that wasn't their call, and fired them.

When they wouldn't get out of the van he tore down Thing Street into the driveway of the Community Police Station. He banged his head against the steering wheel, and prayed. It was padded, like the cells he was doubtless used to; so he didn't suffer major brain damage, not that way at least.

Jesus Jesus Jesus, he repeated....

An officer approached, farting, and informed him he was illegally parked.

Thomas inhaled profoundly, apologized profusely, and smiled like a Manichee....

He moved the van and followed the officer into the station, while Fellini frantically searched his pockets for illegal substances.

Thomas A. Kempis emerged a few moments later, with the officer.

They cast Fellini and Porko out of the van.

*****

According to the date chiselled in the stone block over the door, Emil Durkheim House had squatted like the 25 Cent Woman since 1912 at the busy intersection of Thing Street and Sorend and was never involved in a traffic accident till this evening when Johnny saw the lights flicker down Thing Street, and the cop cars....

One cop car was wedged between the building and a telephone pole. He saw what must have happened. The cop had been in hot pursuit and lost control, dodging clients on the way to Fellini's for some reefer. The firemen had just been called. The police were afraid the car would explode.

It was a slow dance, the tow truck waiting for the firemen to get their hoses in position before approaching. Then the firemen standing at attention, like statues, and slowly watering the road. Like they were taking a leak. The wet part black and shiny under the lights. Even a little steam.

Johnny didn't want them to know he was home, so he turned off the lights. He could see his way around by the glow from his laptop. The last time something like this happened at Emil Durkheim was the bomb scare at Money Mart. He'd missed that evacuation order too, but foolishly went out on his own, and couldn't get back in. That bothered him. He didn't have a anywhere to go, except home. So he stayed there, and laid low.

He watched the show. The clients most affected gathered outside the Beastly door. Porko found them sleeping bags, and helped them move into empty ensuites. Meanwhile, they deliberated whether to order pizza. Porko said go ahead, just save the receipts.

Dead Guy complained that he didn't have anything to eat, or smoke. Porko wondered what he wanted food for. He probably just wanted to exploit the accident, to make up for the deficiencies of a lifetime.

Everyone got mad at Dead Guy. He made himself the centre of the rescue operation, got in the way of the cameraman, and cadged cigarettes, pop, pizza and joints from his fellow evacuees on Beastly. He showed the reporter how he'd been standing when the cop car hit, so that his spine got fused, entitling him to huge compensation. Soon they were all running around, talking about the fat pensions they were going to get from Alapaloozah.

Porko assigned Dead Guy an empty apartment that was slightly larger than a coffin. Instead Dead Guy slept at Fellini's. Later, Fellini told Porko it was the worst night of his whole sordid existence. Dead Guy ate all his food iand commandeered the DVD player to watch zombie pictures. He put aside enough for a fortnight. Dead Guy was living it up....

Emile Durkheim House appealed to cops, or at least their cars. They came there so often. It was a planet, a black hole, a death star. When they got within its gravitational field they careened out of control, dashed themselves against its inhospitable bays. Edwardian attributes notwithstanding....

*****

Porko said Citizen Hearse finally commissioned his student interns to write Johnny a mollifying reply to his complaint about the tampering with his door, the derelicts on the Thing Street steps, the dysfunctional closed-circuit TV, etc. He figured they were related.

The derelicts thought the TV wasn't working, so crept upstairs to try Johnny's door.

He said it was detailed, and apologetic. He didn't believe in apologizing to clients, so he told the landlord to discard it.

He related other developments. Dead Guy had been dislodged from his cabinet after the cop-car crashed into the attributes. While the City fought the Police over responsibility, Dead Guy finally moved into a cell like Johnny's, opposite Mr. Usually's. Of course, City and Police were both merely fronts for Citizen Hearse. The real quarrel was between them and the Insurance. This was a way to inflate damages.

Now that the building was as good as ever again, Dead Guy was re-interred, freeing his cell for Natasha. She was getting older, and she was already elderly. She didn't need room.

Citizen Hearse wanted to renovate, to inflate the rent, but Porko reminded him. It was a broom closet....

Natasha's old apartment was relatively palatial. They could move her, into the basement. She always said, she hated stairs. She'd soon be dead anyway, and unlike Dead Guy she wasn't likely to make a career of it....

Johnny visualized Emile Durkheim House as a boardgame, the clients as pretty little coloured checkers that Citizen Hearse moved around....

Till they landed on the cemetery....

*****

He heard Trixie in the hall, the Baby-Talking Moll. He figured, for his benefit. He heard her enter the room behind him, but didn't bother to turn around. He hoped she'd just go away....

Instead, she returned to the kitchen, noisily munching corn chips. She said she guessed she'd go, as if she expected Porko to beg her to stay. She was procrastinating, baby-talking to the cat. It used to be hers. It scratched her all the time.

Johnny guessed what she really wanted Porko to do was kick him out. See Johnny Boy get the bum's rush.

She reminded Porko to get the 100 dollar bill she said she'd inserted in some book she'd returned. He said he'd found it. Doubtless this was also intended for his benefit. To make Johnny angry about loaning her money he'd mooched off him.

Instead of beating a retreat he got up and went into the kitchen. He slippd on a paint rag and nearly fell. That made him more angry. All he did was tell her how stupid he thought she was.

So I'm stupid, she said.

Totally.

Well, guess I'll be going.

Porko reminded him how abrasive he'd been that evening with Butch. How Butch made eyes at him. Meaning, he's like that.

Johnny flared at his totally one-sided, schizophrenic version of history. When Butch rolled his eyes, he'd meant Porko. Porko'd done nothing but bait Johnny the entire evening.

Then Porko told him. Trixie was the only one refused to sign the petition.

What petition, Johnny demanded.

Max the Butcher's. That he circulated, about YOU!!!

W-w? What did I do?

Interfered with his drug empire.

So why didn't she sign?

She said you were just the same as everyone else.

In the context, an insult.

So where were you on this?

I don't take sides.

Bullshit!

I just pass everything on, to Citizen Hearse, and his thugs.

Johnny figured, he'd been first to sign. As for taking sides, when Trixie smoked her rent money, he put in a good word for her. She was a money maker.

He never gave her an increase....

*****

That did it. He'd been saving some boxed sets for Porko. The Complete Prestige Recordings of Lightning Hopkins, the Complete Hank Williams on Mercury.

It was a warm spring day, a fine day for a walk, along the river....

Pioneers of Alienation

From the middle of the bridge, in front of the ugly high-rise condos, he threw them in....
A middle-class hag in a leather jacket demanded, wasn't the water polluted enough?
Wasn't everything, without more VOICES?

*****

Like everyone else, he heard voices. Stage-whispering, down the hall. A couple of hambones trying to be overheard. Then he heard the clatter of luggage. The sounds of Trixie, leaving Emile Durkheim Friday night, to return Sunday evening, after another strange interlude with her suburban boyfriend.

Their relationship was based on dope. Then he fucked her, while she watched herself in old videos.

That could be awkward, but fortunately she only had bit parts so there wasn't much to see. Sometimes she'd have just entered the drawing room in her maid's uniform to announce to hungry stars that dinner is served, when he'd enter her himself with his great tool, without hardly knocking. He'd begin to convulse and she'd leap up, shouting Look! It's me! and he'd spray all over their day-bed and the little black and white TV screen. She'd immediately start rubbing it with the heel of her doll-sized hand, heedless of the unpleasant stickiness and even traces of his bright red blood as she hurried to restore her lovely face, but by the time she'd have cleared a few pixels, it would've vanished, utterly.

She'd shriek then, as if seeing for the first time, which was not entirely impossible, the shit-brown day-bed with its broken box springs, Glen Manning slouching sideways on it, panting and disheveled, belly swollen, tits bigger than hers, penis tumescent but shrinking slightly from the maximum, with a stoop like a once athletic ball-player grown old, and palsied, and sticky with the same goo that was on her hands.

Ew, she'd say, wiping them off on his grey chest hairs. He'd ignore her, gasping for breath, afraid he was having a cardiac arrest.

He had one every long weekend.

$CAMH was too far away, but Johnny knew.

It was Trixie, falling off her wagon onto Thing Street.

*****

It didn't help that the big new building in the ad looked cold and sterilized, like an Orwellian Truth Ministry.

$CAMH wasn't transforming any lives. Far from it. Unfortunately, the campaign seemed to imply there was some sort of easy fix to complicated matters like madness and insanity. Historically, there never had been.

Just QUACKERY....

He regretted they hadn't at least hired a competent ad agency, that knew something about the subject. They obviously hadn't.

Their radio spots on the MBC talked about being part of the neighborhood being part of the treatment. This could have been just another meaningless jingle, but it seemed to mean, or at least could reasonably be taken to mean, that $CAMH should fit right in with its neighbors and even resemble them.

Its neighbors being wine-bars, dives, and pretentious over-priced galleries, this implied that these things were somehow therapeutic. That was really laughable. Fun, maybe. But therapeutic?

Didn't somebody say something about addiction? How about a little respite from the hustle? How about some....

ASYLUM!

The ads were worse than insensitive. They were stupid....

To begin with, many clients simply couldn't afford to be a part of the new, over-priced, condo-ized $CAMH. Certainly not on welfare or ODSP.

So far as $CAMH was concerned, they couldn't AFFORD to be CRAZY....

Was this their solution to the statistical growth of INSANITY, to price it out of official existence?

BRILLIANT....

Granted, the language of "REMOVING STIGMA" was mainly re-stigmatizing BULLSHIT (they remove the STIGMA - or try - whether you wanted / asked them to or NOT) but even in STATE CAPITALIST TERMS (the terms of $CAMH - State Capitalists ADVANCING Mental Hell) the language of the developers was ESPECIALLY fucked-up.

For one thing, they didn't seem to be on top of their own cliches. The $CAMH STATE CAPITALISTS talked about REMOVING STIGMA of MENTAL ILLNESS, not REMOVING STIGMA of Mental Health. In fucked up STATE

CAPITALIST terms, MENTAL ILLNESS = BAD, Mental Health = GOOD. Of course, the terms were BOTH totally counterfeit (heads or tails, of the same counterfeit coin, etc.), but surely what the DEVELOPERS wanted to say, was REMOVING THE STIGMA OF MENTAL ILLNESS.

Maybe Johnny underestimate them, but he wonder at the busy developer who yet had time to write such swill - or was this the fruit of one of those misspent evenings, being a PART OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD, indeed the PARTY - perhaps the LIFE of the PARTY, at the GLADSTONE or the DRAKE. Weren't they a bit too OLD for this? And RICH?

Then there's the totally bad logic, that puts our DEVELOPER (is DEVELOPER another word for TRANSFOMER as in TRANSFORMING LIVES - ie., LIVE ONES - the slogan of $CAMH?) on a level with $CAMH FOUNDATIONS'S own MENTALLY ILLogical Propaganda Minister. Who thinks all you have to do, to declare a NEW ERA for MAD PEOPLE (she'd say MENTALLY ILL - so STIGMATIZING), is SCORE another COOL MILLION - or 30.

Our DEVELOPER seems to think all you have to do to REMOVE STIGMA - is build another CONDO.

If THAT were TRUE, with all the (almost unexceptionally UGLY) condos on Queen West now, MAD PEOPLE should have been "DESTIGMATIZED" into OBLIVION - (always some people's ultimate solution) YEARS ago. But (of course), it wasn't TRUE....

Wasn't the TRUTH - as usual - rather different - that, as Johnny and some others always suspected, apart from a token few LUCKY ONES, REMOVING STIGMA means REMOVING MAD PEOPLE not only from the grounds but indeed even from the VICINITY of what USED to be their HOSPITAL?

Wasn't THIS what drove an otherwise (apparently) NORMAL developer - to BLOG? The need to spin the obvious into some yarn - along the lines of REMOVING STIGMA - albeit with a tagically FREUDIAN SLIP (at least for them) - ie., Removing the Stigma of Mental Hell?!

Because, their Mental Hell really WAS JOHNNY'S STIGMA!

One TOO MANY? Or MANY TOO FEW?

Still, he doubted it would work. There wasn't any quick FIX. Madness was here to stay. $CAMH would pass way, before MADNESS. Not soon enough!

Besides, he liked his friends just as they were. He wished they'd try another SCHTICK. Meanwhile, where were their usual advocates, Max the Butcher, Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre, et al? It was time they spoke up!

*****

It was moral therapy, such as that fake Tuke never imagined in his wildest, wine-head fantasies.

Their reasons for being together were all negative. They were poor, without exception crazy. Most had even been certified, all had done time on Thing Street.

They lived by inheritances, scams, frauds.

Welfare fraud was normal. They lived for the big score, the big break, the lucky find.

Quasimodo occupied a cell down the hall. Johnny felt him pausing outside his door, listening, whenever Porko was around.

Of course, Johnny was listening too, that evil spy. He really was the same....

He remembered Quasimodo complaining about the roughness on Beastly, when the worst junkie dealer of them all, Fred Fellini, was his buddy.

He was having meetings with Fred about his nephew, King Bong. Quasimodo insisted, King Bong was clean. Smoked a few bananas in the evening, with his pit-bull.

Even Trixie knew King Bong was the worst gorilla on Thing Street, the monkey on everybody's back. He let his pit-bulls range, and never cleaned up their shit. That's why he was moving. It was Spring. The dog-shit was beginning to thaw.

Porko insisted. He let the landlord decide, but the landlord just asked him who he wanted. In the case of Bong, he said no. Then when Bong showed up with his crack-whore with the orange hair, he told him they'd been turned down.

Later, Johnny heard Bong and his girl talking to Quasimodo down the hall. They were pissed off at being rejected. They'd assumed it was a sure thing.

Then they remembered Johnny was listening....

Noel Noel was a teacher in a school....

They shut up.

*****

Voices. Then the knock at the door.

It was Porko. He carried a clipboard. Except for fluffy pink slippers, he looked official, like he enjoyed it.

He wanted to check the intercom. Johnny knew. There were signs posted all over the building, on the Thing Street door, on the office door, even on the way to the laundry room in the basement. They'd been posted all last month, notifying the orphans who'd signed the list that he'd be entering their rooms, and the rest that he might have to enter theirs too.

Johnny wondered why he didn't just post a big notice. Attention! Management reserves the right to enter anyone's room, any time....

Porko pointed at the greasy-looking device beside the door. It had been in the kitchen for 20 years....

Then Porko remembered. Johnny hadn't signed the list.

So, it's O.K.?

The buzzer works, but not the voices. They didn't need it, to hear voices....

The white-coated technician said it was the buttons. He was already prying them out of the panel with a scalpel, scraping bacon fat off the contacts. He reinserted them. They worked when he pressed them. Porko heard the Beastly door buzzing.

Johnny heard a sound from the speaker like what he heard when he held a sea-shell to his ear. The Thing Street Car sounded like waves crashing.....

Tinnitus....

Like he heard all the time....

*****

The intercom had been dysfunctional for weeks. When he pressed the buzzer he don't know which apartment he'll get. It was bingo, only he never won.

Now the buzzer stuck for minutes at a time. He assumed it was OPEN HOUSE at Emile Durkheim.

He knew Hearse was a busy man, but he owned a whole construction company (and half Thing Street). He should have known at least one person who could fix a door-bell.

*****

It was the broom, hitting the gray baseboards of Emile Durkheim House. Thursday. Probably Porko, doing the weekly cleaning.

He peered through the spy-hole in his heavy door. It was....

Johnny opened the heavy door. Porko waved.

He was late. It was 10:30. Porko was usually mopping by 10.

He continued to sweep. He was already outside Trixie's.

Later, when Johnny was leaving for Worthless World and J. Zeus Murphy's Zombie Crypt Emporium, his usual stops, he passed Porko outside her door.

Service call? he asked.

No, he said, looking cross. I have to be at the Clinic in half an hour. That was a dental clinic for floozies, to give them Movie Star smiles.

A quickie, then.

******

Sometimes Johnny found the dust-pan and broom on the landing of the dark-varnished stairs beside a heap of garbage looking like it wandered in off Thing Street and cracked up there. Which was Warfarin Boy's case, but he only did rat poison cut with cleanser.

******

Gabriel, Jack and Frederick (not Fred) were like sharks that smelled fresh blood. They came to Johnny's room after midnight, bumming cigarettes.

Jack looked at him with that sideways expression that meant something was up. He was a predator. He was also a lone hunter. He wasn't sure he wanted Gabriel to be in on his scam.

He was short and slight with a stoop that gave him a slinking air. He was always repeating I'm a handsome guy, but he was actually very ugly. His stringy black hair was rather lousy. He wore glasses one lens of which was either taped in or falling out. His teeth were bad. There was a large hole in one of his front molars. No doubt his appetite

for sugary coffee had something to do with it. The first thing he did in the morning was hit the big urn in the basement. He'd slop a trail of coffee all the way to the parlor. He was a pig.

I'm wise, he told him.

Good, Johnny said. Go to bed.

Can't I stay up if I want to? I'm a big boy.

*****

Gabriel, Jack and Frederick (not Fred) came back five minutes later. When Johnny opened his door, Frederick (not Fred) shrieked and pointed under his bedside table.

My head! It came off my other body.

Johnny couldn't help looking in the direction of his finger. Gabriel looked too, simpering.

Jack kept smoking.

Johnny assured him, there was nothing there.

I'm scared, Jack croaked.

*****

The maid was Hispanic. Despite her total incompetence, she'd cry racism if she was fired.

She resented that she wasn't allowed to keep her own set of keys to sleep with. Citizen Hearse wore his on a gold chain around his neck, till a client tried to choke him to death with it.

They didn't unlock anything whose contents anyone would want to steal. Just the landlord's office and the pantry, which things were always leaving open anyway, despite the faded warnings on the doors, not to leave them open and unattended. There was some change in the filing cabinet. It might have amounted to a hundred dollars.

However it was rumored that the cabinet also contained some medicine of phenomenal value on Thing Street. Maybe that was it. Yet anyone could get into the office just by kicking the door.

The maid used to forget to return her keys after work. They'd be short a set of keys till she returned next week. Johnny attached an enormous medallion, from a posh local jockey club, hoping she'd be reminded by its weight to remove them. She still took them home, though she must have looked conspicuous on the Thing Street car. She must have regarded the set of keys on its little ribbon as a chain of office, like the Lord Mayor of London's, only smaller.

Eventually Citizen Hearse refused to loan her the keys. This was a great blow to her prestige. In revenge she made more trips than usual, in and out of the office and the storage room. Each time she'd interrupt the landlord counting the rent money, or slumped over the cold fireplace, doing mental arithmetic.

He counted rolls of toilet-paper, in his head....

She wanted the keys back....

*****

He also counted the proceeds from the sale of sky-cigs. He bought them by the truck load from the States. He distributed them free till he had all his tenants addicted, then he charged exorbitant prices even for a butt.

He took the ciggy money home every night, and slept with it. Then he'd forget, imagine he'd been robbed, and charge even more to make up the deficit.

*****

Eventually Deane did some of the chores around their ramshackle boarding home.

He went shopping at the No Frills at least once a week. Johnny went with him several times, in his little Volvo (Vulva, Johnny called it). His hand bumped Johnny's knee when he used the shift. He smoked, and asked Johnny if he wouldn't mind rolling down the window. He was sweating like a pig. He was exhausted. He never got enough sleep.

Johnny wondered why, with a conspicuous disability and suffering from chronic pain, Deane was ever allowed to do as much as he did. He knew he needed money.

Deane also did most of the cooking. He was like a support worker, only better because he didn't eat the best pieces of meat or take food home with him. He was home....

With bad knees, a brace, and chronic pain, Deane was the one who had to lug around heavy boxes of groceries, buckets of bleach and water, a wringer, a mop, a broom, a dust-pan, etc. After returning from a shopping spree it was

routine for him to walk into the landlord's office, to ignore him if he was in, and to grab the bottle of painkillers off the mantle....

If the landlord was in he would cringe behind his ancient roll-top desk and rub his hands together for warmth, even in the dog days of summer.

No one would have guessed that this wreck was Citizen Hearse!

*****

Citizen Hearse refused to be in Emile Durkheim House any more than he had to be.

He preferred the adjacent Simian Sands Tower, which he also owned.

He enjoyed watching his crackhead scions, Josef and Ulyanov, run it into the ground as a tax write-off, a front for global money-laundering, espionage, and illegal arms deals with the innumerable terrorist cells which operated out of Thing Street basement apartments and thrift shops, etc....

Citizen Hearse just slept around. He had a motley assortment of psychomes, flops, shooting galleries, and brothels to choose from. Like King Charles revealing his identity in a tavern, or Queen Christina, he'd announce himself. Rudolph Hearse, Media Mogul, God and Czar.

Meanwhile Simian Sands resembled the United Nations under terrorist attack with all the interpreters on strike. The front bashed in by an indignant martyr. Citizen Hearse thought it resembled nothing so much as an old man's bloody dentures, right after he'd kicked him in the mouth. True, he didn't do that very often any more. Nevertheless the thought made him simper every morning, on his post-prandial stroll (or was it troll?) through his vast Porkdale holdings....

He was really a poet at heart....

Moving vans full of fertilizer pulled up and stalled at the illuminated fountain in the circular driveway. Carlotta's brats emptied their cream soda into the water. It gurgled and fomented like the memorial of the Iran/Iraq war. His simper broke into peals of delighted belly laughter....

High atop the gutters of Thing Street, the Celtic/Slavic/Hindu/Jamaican/Chinese/Tibetan Scrooge, bilked head office (his children, Josef and Ulyanov), over-extended his investments, inflated the value of his media empire, sold short, etc....

Suddenly a ruckus disturbed his mental arithmetic. He heard the banging of scrap metal in the street twenty stories below. He peered through the lace curtains of a lace-curtain Irishman of mixed provenance.

Half naked in short-shorts, smooth shoulders gleaming in the winter twilight, Jack dragged an iron bed-frame down Thing Street. He'd plundered it from the Simian Sands dumpster. Citizen Hearse had seen it only that morning, on returning from his stroll. He'd wanted it for himself. Jack shouted at the patrons who emerged from bars, pizza parlors and coffee-shops along Thing Street to line his way like spectators at a parade, that they were all bums.

Citizen Hearse raised the receiver of a black post-war rotary phone to thin, tobacco-stained lips.

Security, he croaked.

*****

He stopped counting, stood up and walked to the coat rack where he'd hung his knapsack. He delved inside it till he found what he wanted, an enormous large-print leather-bound gilt-edged volume, the cover embossed with the words THE MEDITATIONS OF MARCUS AURELIUS: HIS GOLDEN BOOK. It was big enough to read through the big bay window, from the other side of Thing Street. To that end, he placed it upon the table, and propped it against the lamp.

The whole world was watching, across Thing Street. Anyone could see. Citizen Hearse was a voracious reader of IMMORTAL CLASSICS. He returned to the cigarette money.

He resumed counting.

He was interrupted when suddenly the lights flickered. It was as if a gigantic hand had parted the water upriver from the cataract making the turbines flutter in their granite cage. He saw their shadows lurch across the lawn as they trod the eves. He saw himself on the beaver-headed dias at the head of the Table, at the next assembly of the Friends of Opera in the Concert Hall of the newy-restored Royal Pork, the one with images of big-boobed Diana, convened for the express purpose of bestowing upon himself the Presidency of the Order. He saw himself, slowly rising from the beaver-headed throne, wielding his fork embalzoned with the escutcheon of Dadanian Pacifier and lightly tapping his crystal goblet, as liveried flunkies served the last of the piping hot....

WHITE SQUIRRELS!

He lunged for his cell-phone and frantically dialed Porko to CHECK THE TRAPS....

Even the cigarette money paled by comparison, to WHITE SQUIRRELS....

They presented considerable logistical challenges, however. Citizen Hearse repeatedly forgot all about them. Which was natural, for someone of his importance. However, this meant that when he finally remembered to remind Porko to FEED THE BIRDS, as the song goes, he arrived upon a scene of CARNAGE, the birds having become food for RACCOONS, at somewhat less than his intended BANQUET....

*****

Citizen Hearse was master of 1,000 disguises. He could be tall, gaunt and clean-shaven or he could be short, dark, stocky, bearded and bald. He could dress like an old-fashioned phrenologist, or a Dadanian Public Man, in a long black frock-coat with, dangling from the collar at the end of its silk leash, the inevitable golden pince-nez. Or he could dress like one of His Excellency's civil servants on summer vacation in the tundra, circa 1950, his clothes loose-fitting and comfortable-looking, even if he himself looked slightly nauseous.

He ran several large properties. The nursing home was typical. The company flagship, it was called Thing's Retreat. Napoleon, after Berezina, wouldn't have retreated there.

Citizen Hearse had mafia connections. Some people thought he was a Don. Maintenance was contracted out to an incompetent mob. Once he had to vacate all of a sudden with thirty elderly tenants, after one of his arms dealers cried foul and threatened to blow up Thing's Retreat. They took up temporary residence in a hovel, in a remote gang-ridden suburb. It was run by psychopaths. One morning a female tenant screamed, and vomited her ploughman's lunch. There was bleach in the orange juice.

Charles Waldorf Handy was his friend. They bore a certain physical resemblance. What could be more natural, between the entrepreneur of physical and mental disability, and his intellectual Janissary? They shared a taste for big women. They shared the women, too....

Things thought he was Charles Waldorf Handy. Johnny thought he was crazy. He thought he was....

*****

The Great Svengali, haunting the watering holes of Europe....

From Baden-Baden to Spa he impersonated maitre d's.... Unctuously fawning over Western Civilization, he smudged it with his greasy towel.... The Alps were less Swiss-looking after he'd served lunch.... The chalets looked run down.... Even the cuckoos were tardy....

Waiting was the perfect front for his forays on English women.... He loved that Lady Di look.... He ogled a fat cow, horizontal on a worn chair in the crummy front office.... Imagining her in the sparkling tiara of the Duchess of Ormond.... Thinking she's more than a lousy Duchess.... She's the Princess, and he's her randy big-eared Prince....

He was so slimy and disgusting.... At first things thought he was a born-again Christian.... Maybe he wasn't a Christian at all.... Maybe he was a Catholic or (worse) an Anglican.... Or an ex-Prime Minister.... The infamous Cretin deserved to operate a chain of Thing Street Psychomes.... He deserved to live in one.... As if he loved poor things so much he chose to live with them even if it killed him.... They certainly would....

Citizen Hearse wanted to kill White Men, and take their women....

The black floor-length frock-coat with genuine imitation beaver fur train.... The killer pince-nez currently adopted by hard-core rap artists emulous of genuine thuggery and its perquisites.... The mincing Roman casuistry that mimed morality.... That pilloried homosexuals but connived at many a rascally Jesuitical pederast....

He made periodic visitations.... Swooping on the protestant manse at Thing and Dung.... The receptionist had that delicate pink complexion he craved.... Like the lining of a conch....

The duchesses, the watering-holes, the Swiss chalets, the ultramontane airs were camouflage for ambuscades on the pretentious pink and white woman he longed to puncture with his great, swarthy sugarstick....

Not like her, but HER....

*****

She was very Anglo Saxon, tall, with long blond hair that she sometimes braided. She could be severe, and she favored 50s-style clothes that gave her a slightly iconic look. She had a fresh complexion....

Plastic Anglo cupie-doll....

The most beautiful big woman he'd ever seen....

*****

Pioneers of Alienation

Citizen Hearse used to be a hippie. Easy-going. Didn't fly off the handle the moment the rent was late. Then he started to read up on ecology. Got a book by David Suzuki. It changed his life, even if he got it all wrong.

Johnny was convinced he joined the Green Party out of parsimony.

*****

The really appalling thing is that, thanks to bad management (Citizen Hearse), everyone else slacked off.

On Thing Street Deane's obvious physical disabilities weren't even noticed. He refused to work the system.

Deane's boxes didn't fit very well in the trunk of the Volvo and made extra garbage every week. Laura Secord had to break them down and tie them up to go onto the curb. Johnny used to help her, wrapping lengths of twine around the pile of flattened boxes. Laura would press a thumb on the knot and hold it till he finished tying. The small Kraft dinner boxes always flipped out. A pain in the ass.

Johnny enjoyed shopping, pushing the cart while Deane foraged ahead for the things he knew by heart. It was like being married. This went on till a Jamaican black from an adjacent psychome made fun of the arrangement. He came from a homophobic culture; he couldn't help it. Then Deane only took women. Johnny stayed home, or went to his stupid job, in that lousy thing store on Thing Street....

Deane bought what everyone liked to eat. Why eat healthy, if you were going to die soon, and you knew it? He bought chicken strips, Delicio brand pizzas, good quality fish (haddock), fries. He made himself what he called chip butts. They were sandwiches, French fries between slices of buttered white bread. For a treat he made Johnny a drink flavored with Ribena.

Once he bought pineapples and sliced them on the wooden island in the kitchen. Johnny took one and cut into it without removing the tough skin. Deane watched him, then he said, You don't know what you're doing, do you?

Johnny bought pineapples in cans. Deane showed him how to slice fresh ones.

Johnny saved the shopping list that Deane made for him before he went on his last vacation. Under Often Used Staples he listed bread, milk, salad fixens, fruit, potatoes, juice (breakfast). He added 2-4 quick meals for the weekend. Then he must have been distracted, because he wrote a dash, but nothing after it....

The worst part of it was going shopping the first time, after it happened. Shopping was an activity he identified with Deane. They were unable to postpone it any longer and still have anything to eat. Citizen Hearse barely knew how to drive. Johnny had to enlist the services of one of his friends. She was very nice, very Anglican, what most things call a good woman. She was fifty, white-haired. She wore half-glasses around her neck on a chain. She had a pencil-thin mustache....

She was the worst possible replacement for Deane, who was young and atheistic and would always be. And he was male.

Deane eventually got half a dozen purple bins that he used instead of boxes. They were on the shelf in the pantry. They hadn't been disturbed since Deane replaced them, Friday afternoon.

*****

Trixie changed her approach at the HIV clinic. Instead of asking her clients, what does the H stand for, she asked them to think about their lives; she imagined that if things' lives improved, everything else would follow. But there was too much guilt....

Trixie discussing the sex show in the automotive building of the Dadanian National (Things) Circus.

Sex at the Circus! Unthinkable a few years ago.

Now the firemen from the burbs flaunted their tits with the strippers and table-dancers. Doctors exhibited the latest quickest easiest vasectomy. The Public Health Nurse put a diaphragm in the middle of his display of birth control pills.

Trixie demanded what he meant. Everybody knew. Diaphragms didn't work!

She was disgusted. It was sick. The men in high-heels getting hair implanted in their heads and burnt off their backs. The hawkers shouting, Teflon frying pans (that sugar wouldn't stick to) were good for your sex-life. They drove Trixie and her sisters away, for trying to ruin a good party. Scaring everybody about AIDS, when all they wanted to do was PARTY....

The hip-hop girls had to put up with fat spiked condoms. Trixie wanted to lead a revolt. They hurt and they leaked. The sisters were expected to respect all cultures provided they were consistent with safety.

What about pain?

*****

Thing Street Asylum

Johnny remembered when they went to the Circus. On Thing Street workers had been taking clients to the Circus for decades. Once they were called keepers. Clients were called patients, or lunatics. It was a tradition. It changed, and stayed the same.

He'd seen pictures of the male attendants at Thing Street asylum circa 1910.

Male was tautological. They stood in an airing court, dressed for cricket. They weren't ugly. They resembled firemen....

In white T-shirts that showed off their broad shoulders, some of them were handsome. He supposed before there were a lot of drugs, keepers had to be fit. They were tall. There were no doubt a lot of Englishmen among them, like Deane. He couldn't forbear adding, of course.

Deane's parents brought him to Dadania when he was a toddler. They came by boat, to Montreal. They were among the last immigrants to experience the archetypal arrival into the Gulf of St. Lawrence. It was like being swallowed.

Deane's ancestors were working class. Maybe his precursors had affairs with clients, call them what you will. Maybe the keepers became clients. They socialized at periodic asylum balls. Sometimes they became fathers.

If someone put the residents of Emile Durkheim House in tight T-shirts and photographed them holding cricket bats in a park, they'd look just like keepers dressed for cricket circa 1910, in one of C. Lamprini Eel's laminated photographs hanging in the corridor of the administration wing of Thing Street Asylum. There'd be a few women. The only difference....

Johnny read pages of stuff in the provincial archives. Notes and reports. Complaints from social workers. They'd given patients tickets to the Circus, but the patients scalped them. They went to the movies instead...

Letters in patients' files beginning, Dear Reader....

Johnny loved to read them. Between sheets of yellow foolscap would be a free ticket to the Circus, 40 years ago....

He wanted something to be preserved. He liked to think of someone like himself reading what he wrote.

Like him, but not him....

Deane said it wouldn't happen. They'd be burnt.

The fire will destroy all Moreau's work....

They were on their way back from the Circus, when he told him about pain.

Deane and he had spent their money playing rigged games of chance. Then everyone had boarded the Polar Express. It spun around very fast, but never got off the ground, never went anywhere.

He remembered the sight of Gabriel and Karl, their mouths wide open, eyes wide open too, clenching the bar in front of them as their long hair lashed their faces and the train accelerated.

Deane said the pain in his knees kept him awake. Johnny sensed him gauging whether or not to be open and deciding he would be. Johnny supposed it had to do with the spirit of the outing.

It was palpable to Johnny, and probably to Deane too. This was what families did. The last time was forty years ago, when he was no older than Deane when he arrived by water. Johnny also arrived by water, or at least over it, on the little bridge at the entrance to the grounds. His family had been together then. His father was with them.

Johnny hadn't been there since that day forty years ago, but things looked familiar: the layout of the grounds, the stuffed animals, the proximity of the lake.

He had returned as a member of a family.

With Deane....

Johnny wondered why they didn't just burn everything right now. Deane himself was cremated....

Don't look back....

No, you can't go back....

To Constantinople....

*****

He remembered Deane standing beside his car in front of their boarding home. He was holding a red carton of cigarettes. Check day.

Johnny got used to his Lucky Strikes.

It might have been another time, but he thought he saw him just a few moments later as he climbed up the front steps and paused on the porch before entering. By then he had one of the cigarettes between his thin lips.

He was wearing shorts. His legs were thin.

The rest of his clothing consisted of an open shirt with the sleeves rolled up, a T-shirt, and running shoes. It would become as familiar as the cigarettes.

He was at least 6'3, with large hands and feet that reminded him of a stick-man. He had a sensitive face, a finely shaped head. His coal black hair needed trimming.

He seemed at once young and old, athletic and frail. There was something troubling about his arms and legs. There was a suggestion of gauntness and pain.

That wouldn't be because of this enormous brace I'm wearing on my left leg, now would it? Deane asked him once, when he said he looked uncomfortable.

Johnny tried to sympathize, but he wouldn't accept pity. He'd experienced a bad flying accident....

Johnny couldn't see that day, partly because it was still early summer. In hot weather when he wore sandals, Johnny saw that Deane had lost both big toes....

Among others pieces of useless information, Johnny told him that he bought his shoes second hand. When they were working in the kitchen he said he got athlete's foot after he started to jog. Deane thanked him for that information too. Not on his curriculum vitae. He said the second-hand shoes probably had more to do with it. He took care of his feet. He just didn't have that much of them left.

His thigh was scarred, where the bone burst through. He was a man of many hurts. He suffered from chronic pain.

Johnny had four pictures of Deane. He took the first two in October, almost exactly a year before it happened.

They show him in his usual summer attire: open shirt over a T-shirt, short pants, New Balance © running shoes, white gym socks. By co-incidence that was the last time Deane wore shorts that year. The weather turned cold the next day, and stayed cold till spring.

In the first picture Deane posed for him. He picked up the purple bin that he used to carry groceries when he went shopping. Johnny supposed he'd wanted to be photographed with the things that went with his life. The shopping bin was emblematic of Deane's life in the house. The plumber's snake was emblematic of Johnny's.

Johnny thought the latter should be on his coat of arms, if he ever got one. He was always carrying it up the dark-varnished stairs, to unplug the toilets. Deane used to follow him in case he needed his experienced help. He'd observe while Johnny attacked the load of reeking shit. He once remarked that everyone's smelled the same. Only theirs was worse, because of all the meds.

Deane stood sideways, in front of the door. He raised the arm that wasn't holding anything and waved his hand as if he were lecturing someone.

Johnny shot him.

In the second picture he faces the camera. He faces Johnny. His expression is friendly. This was Johnny's favorite. There was a story behind it. It was Deane's way of paying him back for three packs of cigs that he'd just given him. He'd stuffed them into his Khaki knapsack, when he was out of the House.

There was another story behind his needing cigarettes and not being able to buy them for himself. That accounted for his solemn expression in the other pictures. Johnny took these at Christmas, without permission. Deane hated them.

He looks very glum stringing lights on the artificial tree. It should have been a happy task. Money had something to do with it.

Deane hated Christmas. Which had everything to do with money.

At least that was the last one....

*****

He helped Deane out with more than just cigarettes. At least he thought he was helping him. Who knew? He could have done more. He didn't want to offend him. A terrible inhibition.

When Johnny gave him something and he chided him for it, telling him he had to stop, Johnny insisted he take it, as long as he wasn't angry. He didn't mind, if he was embarrassed.

Deane assured him, he wasn't angry....

Johnny gave him his old aquarium, with three goldfish that he'd bought in Chinatown.

That was when he really started to help him out.

Goldfish were supposed to be lucky.

*****

The door-bell rang. It wasn't Friday, so it couldn't be Quinlan, with his canes and meds for the clients, in a brown paper bag. Fellini hated him. Competition....

Johnny thought it was just another client, from some loco Handy House. He was always opening new ones. Citizen Hearse had annexed the mansion across the street for his own chain. For a million loonies.

Thing Street Asylum

It wasn't his money. He was an agent of the government. Nevertheless Citizen Hearse knew, the future belonged to him. He had only to refer to the millions Emile Durkheim House saved, every day every client was a client as opposed to a patient in the Asylum.

Saved, and lost....

Johnny thought that group homes were at once as artificial and unnecessary as anything else that was man-made, and as inevitable. He only wondered how anyone could avoid ending up in such a dump. He hadn't.

He finally answered the door.

It was Porko.

He hadn't found a manufacturing job....

Johnny hadn't seen him since the last time he told him he never wanted to see him again. Porko wouldn't give him a hand job. He hung out with Johnny, at the cunt-struck sailor's thing store.

There wasn't much happening.

Johnny helped him with handouts of money, food, and cigarettes. It was natural. Porko was broke. Johnny was a sucker. Porko started showing up at closing time to help Johnny bring in the heavier things: dressers, cedar chests, mahogany table tops.

For months Porko never visited him, though Johnny often saw him pass the yard, with its pathetic sale, as insouciant as ever.

Johnny wanted to pull him off, so he gave him fifty bucks, and hoped he'd be more affectionate next time.

Somebody escalated and threw a bunch of videos over the balcony. A commentary. Porko asked Johnny to escort him out of the yard, out of sight and range. He didn't realize. The cameras didn't record....

Johnny did....

*****

Always Butch Dickerfiddle....

Never Buck Stallione....

The only way anybody ever knew he was alive was from his constant typing on the Commodore 64 in his lonely bedroom....

Otherwise, he was quiet. Too quiet....

When Old Man Dickerfiddle thought about His Boy he had great difficulty visualizing his face, besides whatever he'd been doing for the last fortnight....

Typing, typing, typing....

Kids locked themselves in their rooms as soon as they could type... They didn't come out till they were twelve or thirteen.... Strange fruit....

Stranger, now that he thought about it.... Fortunately he rarely did.... He was usually too busy winning at poker down at the Teamsters' Loco 69 Union Hall.... He never drank, because it interfered with his winnings....

Counting his take and dodging broken bottles hurled at his bald spot by angry losers, he parried questions about his Personal Life....

Hey Dickerfiddle, what's the matter with that kid of yours?

He had to admit, he hadn't a ready answer....

If one were to describe Dutch Dickerfiddle's life in modern cinematic terms, the title of this b-movie would be PROGRAM WITHOUT APPLICATION...

It was a mystery how the son of Butch Dickerfiddle ever got that way, to stay that way forever.... The plot would be a series of second-hand acquisitions.... A Commodore 64.... A letter confirming Butch's acceptance into Our Computer Science Program.... From a typical Dadanian liberal arts bible-school, with the atmosphere of a badly ventilated high-school gym. Where the faculty were rejects from a Roger Corman movie.

Butch wore his engineering hard hat to bed....

He slept with it on....

After his second nervous breakdown it was discovered among his few (treasured) possessions....

Butch discovered other young men with Commodores.... There was some kind of code by means of which they identified one another.... Borland or Pascal... It was unintelligible to normals.... Some kinds of poison are odorless, colorless, tasteless.... They still work though....

They only wanted to talk about their Commodore 64s.... When they weren't typing they were arranging Commodore 64 slumber parties to which every guest would bring his Commodore and connect it to all the other Commodores and make a Network....

When they got tired and blissfully sated with typing they would all get ready for bed in just shorts and T-shirts.... Then they'd start talking about expansion RAM and GEOS and the resurrection of the AMIGA, by which time they'd be making rabbit punches at one another's naked biceps, and maybe even wrestling a little.....

In gym outsiders could tell who'd attended a Commodore slumber party lately by the livid purple bruises all over their bodies.... They muttered under their breath....

They were Commodorables....

Pioneers of Alienation

*****

His kids got Johnny's laptops. After Porko got them off Johnny, cheap.

Johnny paid nearly 600 bucks for the Toshiba. Porko wanted it, the first time he saw it. He said it was for Little Eva, who was studying to be a Secretary for the National Socialists. Herman still got it, by throwing a Nazi fit. He snapped to attention, saluted it, and broke into a revision of Hitler's speech for the Nuremberg Rally.

For lebensraum, he said LAPTOP.

Little Herman was known to weep, over food. Porko used to make homedmade lasagna for him, Joe, and Eva. When Der Kinder came over and he didn't have time for home-made, he sent Johnny Boy to the No Frillies for frozen. When Herman saw it, he burst into tears.

It was like the Last Days, in Berlin....

Still, the laptop should have gone to Little Eva, as she was the only one who could read and write, but being a Party Girl was no cherry bowl. When she ventured to suggest that laptops had to be earned, she was shouted down with a lot of talk about blood and iron, etc....

Little Herman goose-stepped several times around Emile Durkheim. When he got back, they voted for appeasement.

*****

He saw Quinlan hobbling down Thing Street. Two canes, one client. The clients' client's client. He hadn't seen him since he'd promised Porko a pension from Asylums and Casinos. He broke his promise. Johnny doubted he'd ever kept one. The Revolution, Evita. He'd betrayed them all. The canes were props.

Johnny'd wanted him to talk to Porko. To give him some pointers. About getting that package. Quinlan got very unctuous, confidetial. He hobbled over and bent down to whisper. In case Johnny didn't know, he already had one. That is, he meant to say, he was a client.

Johnny'd known it all along. What else could have accounted for Quinlan's semi-official capacity, at Emile Durkheim? His bumbling incapacity, that is. Dosettes, missing half their meds. The week's clozapine. Johnny could tell without even looking at it, just by the weight. So why couldn't Quinlan? O, yeah....

No! Really? You don't say. Johnny put on an act.

He didn't give his number out to clients anymore, he'd been taken advantage of too often. He'd give it to Johnny, though, provided he didn't give it to anyone, except Porko. He insisted it was his real number, not voice mail.

The time came for the appointment. Porko was waiting. Johnny dialed the number. Voice mail. He'd put on an act.

Today he came on, happy-faced. He'd never let him down. He shook his canes at him, like he was naughty for not wanting to talk to him. He called Johnny bad.

Johnny said Quinlan was worse.

Still joking, he said nobody wanted to talk to him

Johnny said he didn't either. The only time he ever asked him for anything, he let him down. He noticed. He was with a client. Another loser, from the psychome around the corner. He laid it on thick. With a quiver in his voice. Any moment, he'd start balling....

*****

Citizen Hearse changed the tape in the video recorder on top of the filing cabinet where the meds were. For security. Like the locks, it didn't work.

The tape was supposed to record what the cameras saw on the front porch and right outside the back door. Most of the time the lights were burnt out because Babs and Gladys were fighting over whose turn it was to change the bulb.

Consequently the cameras usually saw nothing but darkness occasionally illuminated by flares from the matches of tenants smoking on the steps. When they worked they filmed innumerable cigarette breaks.

*****

The smoking ban posed a big problem for them. There would have been a rebellion, if they hadn't granted a major concession. They let residents break curfew between 12:30 and 6:00 A.M., to go outside for a smoke. This subverted the entire system, since it enabled them to smoke crack. It was a condition that they remained within sight of the camera, but all they had to do was turn around, and no one could see what they were doing. Legally they were supposed to smoke thirty feet away from the door, in other words, out of range.

Thing Street Asylum

No wonder Citizen Hearse always supported the loco National Socialist Reform candidate It was the party for dealers, thugs, and workers of every trade....

It was absurd, and was bound to make trouble, one way or another. Now small groups of smokers hung around the door, or loiteried on the steps of adjacent buildings. The St. John's ambulance had a garage next door and the drivers complained that the residents hung around their property, smoking stronger weeds than tobacco. What could they do with a City administration that refused to recognize human nature? They'd made it illegal even to show a pack of cigarettes in public, in restaurants and bars, but they'd enabled junkies to do crack.

It was typical of Shelter Standards.

It was schizophrenic....

That's my weakness now....

*****

Someone had been tampering with his door! There was a groove where PORK members pried it with Elmo's used cutlery....

There were utensils on the floor, and fresh paint-chips....

He came from the Beastly side. The crackers left similar deposits of baking soda outside his door, intended to horrify him by their resemblance to cocaine....

They wrote messages in landlord paint....

No crack here, ass-hole....

He thought he'd got away from all that CRIMINAL ACTIVITY....

Fellini, Butch, Dead Guy....

Hearse-Ferrari put them up to it....

The cameras were a good idea, but he had them de-activated....

Likewise, fixing the steps, but it invited druggy-looking people from the drop-in. They sat all day, rocking....

They claimed Emile Durkheim House was their PRIVATE PROPERTY, although they were COMMUNIST....

They couldn't sit on the steps of the drop-in, or the social workers would beat them up....

*****

Serge used to park his Lada on the street in front of Yucca Flats. Johnny would watch for it when Serge was late for shift-change. It was tricky to watch the monitor and the street at once. They both seemed like movies after a while, running on different channels. So they were.

Serge was usually late. He seemed depressed about life, his own especially. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, he had trouble getting up in the morning. He'd started a full-time job as manager at a nearby Handy House. He was tired, and insecure. He lacked self-confidence. He figured he'd fail at this too, like Russia. He was probably right.

Sometimes Serge parked in front of the funeral home. His girlfriend worked there, laying out the corpses. It was the same population. Occasionally some do-good organization used the premises at night. Jack and some of the other tenants regularly crashed Alcoholics Anonymous for the free coffee and donuts. They could have joined.

*****

Serge was so manic it took hours to slow him down enough to do shift change. By 10 A.M. Johnny'd be speeding too. They'd still be smoking on the steps, two hours after Johnny was supposed to go home (if you could call it that). Luckily, he didn't have far to go.

Serge expatiated on Russian Cinema. He wanted to make a movie. Potemkin!

Movies were being made right there, under the lens of their security camera, when it worked. They featured themselves, with a lot of loco losers, and guest appearances by the cops. They could have done the Odessa steps, Scarlet at Tara, or the Palace stairs scene in Sunset Boulevard, on their own dark-varnished stairs....

At least Serge knew something about Russian cinema. In the course of one manic morning he told Johnny that the Great Theme since the Revolution was the good bad man. He said, it was because the instability destroyed normality as it created a brutal new order crying out for regulation.

In post-revolutionary Russia the strongest regulatory forces were totally discredited. They were really just thugs. At least the army defeated the Fascists.

Serge said his family was still communist. A lot of the families in his village saved the old hammer and sickle and flew it privately on special occasions. His cousins in the army learned old, secret marches. Now there was also the Russian Mafia, the most corrupt but least discredited force for social cohesion in the entire Russian Federation. A

sociologist would have attributed that to the strength of its collective fictions. Men of honour, etc. Serge was always writing flaky agit prop screen plays about Russian gangsters and other great sinners. Only God loved sinners more.

*****

Johnny used to bring movies to Yucca Flats. Unfortunately his taste was for old black and white movies from the 30s.

A resident warned him.

Don't, he said. Not unless he wanted them thrown back at him. They wanted action movies.

Another explaind that they were too distracted, under too much stress to pay attention to old movies. He agreed they were better. If he had a home and was there, he'd watch old movies. For a homeless man living in a shelter they had too much plot. Homeless things were like modern writers, and vice versa.

Johnny figured they were in an old movie, so why bother watching one.

However, one resident sat and watched The Manchurian Candidate from beginning to end. He said it was ahead of its time. That was high praise from this community, which believed in progress. They were watching that scene when the soldiers were hypnotized into thinking they were women at a meeting of Culture Club.

Most preferred action, with two or more male protagonists, with lots of bonding and group spirit. This might have been what the ancient Greeks meant by eros, but the residents wouldn't have wanted to hear about it from Plato.

They inoculated themselves against homosexuality, they thought, by watching movies that combined male bonding with a lot of wholesale heterosexuality. The price of this was a dismissive attitude to women, which belied them. They protested too much, watching the same thing over and over, till the tape wore out and broke in the machine.

An Officer and a Gentleman was a big hit, the heterosexual love story set securely in a foil of male camaraderie and esprit du corps, etc.

Someone would point out a scene in a dormitory, and say it was just like Yucca Flats.

Johnny knew that as a front-line worker he was one of the martinets making life difficult for the good soldiers. That was casting him against type. He was The Chorus in Antigone. Reverend Hale in The Crucible.

Such characters were ignored.

They didn't notice him making his hourly rounds, or pretended not to. Occasionally someone in a group by the lockers looked over at him, if he was a new intake. The regulars knew that he didn't even know what he was looking for, so was harmless unless they did something stupid.

Before returning to the office he'd enter the washroom, and listen outside the stalls for the noise of bowels moving.

He'd sniff the air for something besides shit, for crack

By the showers he'd hear the noise of a hand slapping flesh.

Once he brought in a movie that featured bonding without heterosexual inoculation. It was a series of stories about things that had happened in a hotel room. One soldier had a girlfriend. She was wary of the other soldier, who was jealous and had something on his friend. Johnny thought anyone could have guessed where the plot about the two soldiers on leave was headed.

They were in denial because when at the denouement the camera panned from the bed, inevitably revealing two men, asleep, in one another's arms, with limp semi-erections, they heckled till he changed the tape.

*****

Johnny watched the monitor. A large, white-haired man approached the door carrying two large plastic bags in each hand. Janet watched too, as he took all the bags in one hand and pressed the buzzer with the other. Mr. Ferreira, with donations, from the Hotel.

Tell him you'll be down.

Johnny asked him to wait, and hurried downstairs. He'd already given his bags to a couple of residents smoking on the sidewalk. Johnny thanked him, and they went back upstairs. Johnny took the bags from them at the door of the kitchen.

He came two or three times a week with plastic containers of left-overs from expensive functions hosted by the P/Bigge Banks in the Hotel. There was always something going, especially at Christmas. The porters had a room where they stashed sandwiches, sushi, cheese-trays. It was too much to take home. Johnny remembered, how the porters loaded him with goods, like a Trojan Horse, or mule, and walked him past the guard, who winked at them, from his glas booth. They hardly dented their stash....

Yucca Flats was the only shelter in the city that regularly served sushi for snack. Most of the residents hated it. Those that didn't, got seconds, even thirds. Johnny sometimes put stacks of plastic trays on the other side of the pass-through. It was all dated, and most of it had to be used in a day or two. It didn't keep.

The meat and cheese sandwiches were more popular. They usually ran out at snack time. Then he would grab stacks of processed cheese slices from the big fridge, and put them between buttered slices of wonder bread. When

there was nothing else, he made peanut butter and jam sandwiches. He was generous with the peanut butter, which he slathered on. It came in a big white tub.

Once some corporation donated ice-cream as a treat. He looked through the pass-through and estimated that he had enough. He gave two scoops to each guest in line. He failed to consider late arrivals. He ran out.

One man slept through first call for snack. He got up after last call, 15 minutes later. There was no more ice-cream. He got angry. If Johnny hadn't given out such large portions, there'd have been enough.

Johnny was embarrassed. He didn't know what to say, but the other residents rebuked the latecomer. If he'd got off his ass sooner, he'd have got some.

*****

He'd been told to watch for a man who'd been barred for urinating on Ground Zero during a psychotic episode. Johnny knew that a number of long-term residents regularly talked to voices that were the auditory hallucinations of schizophrenia. The resident in question must have had an especially virulent form of it, if he was getting evicted. Maybe he was paranoid and picking fights.

Johnny was working with Lena, whom he'd worked with before, usually the 4 till midnight shift. She was Jamaican. She called everyone dear. She reminded him of a lioness. She was short and stocky, her square face framed by dreads, like a lion's mane. She was good in a crisis. She didn't get upset, or back down. She was very nice.

Tonight she was very tired. After 2 A.M. she went into the back room to rest. Johnny sat at the desk under the window in the old principal's office, and studied the monitor. How many educators must have sat in that very spot, scowling at late arrivals?

When residents pressed the buzzer he automatically admitted them, if they looked familiar, or acted like they belonged. Everyone looked familiar….

He watched as a man in goggles approached the camera and presented his right eye for a retinal scan. He was numb with fatigue, because he reacted as if it were an old joke, and buzzed him in. The man looked like Terry Thomas in a flying suit. He ran upstairs, into the dorm on the right.

Then Johnny realized what he'd done. He checked the tracking list for the dorm and confirmed the bed number of the unwanted lunatic. He'd entered that dorm.

It was him….

The retinal scan should have told him.

He took the flashlight off the round table beside the sink, then replaced it. It didn't work. There wasn't a fresh set of batteries in the whole agency. He took his flashlight out of his knapsack and headed into the dorm. He shone it on No. 10. It had been stripped, but the man had collapsed upon it, clothed.

Johnny tapped the mattress with his flashlight. The man started.

Come to the office. The usual request.

The man didn't respond.

Come to the office. I need to talk to you. Johnny heard residents stir in adjacent beds.

Come to the office. He tapped again.

What do you want? The man reared up, escalating. He was trying to sleep. Couldn't Johnny see?

He'd extinguished the flashlight. He couldn't see much. He was about to ask him a fourth time, when he distinguished a tough-looking man standing beside his bed.

Go to the office.

Suddenly Johnny noticed half a dozen similar forms looming over them, silhouetted against the enormous windows of the former schoolhouse.

*****

A resident became delusional and thought another was watching him from one of the metal benches just inside the TV room. There was a noise like a gun shot, and the other turned to look at him, but he'd gone, having smashed the heavy plate-glass window into a cobweb, a Halloween ornament.

Johnny got up, and examined it. Everyone else in the smoking room got up too, and advanced to the door, like the audience in the courtroom drama of a 40s noir. It wasn't supposed to happen like that in real life, but they knew who'd done it. They wanted to catch him, or finger him so Johnny could. He followed them into the dorm, to a bank of lockers.

A tough young man was fiddling with the dial of his combination lock. Was that him? A resident nodded discreetly, not wanting the other to see.

Johnny approached him slowly. He stopped rattling the lock for a moment, to clutch his bloody right hand. He'd used his fist. He was dripping blood on the floor.

Come on, we'd better put something on that. We've got some stuff in the office.

Are you going to call the police?

We'll see.

He was staring at me. With child-molester eyes. Like the one abused my son.

It was him!

Come to the office.

Lena accompanied them through the dorm. Johnny said it was O.K., the resident hurt his hand. Lena stayed calm, saying nothing, as usual, as he wanted.

She went into the TV room, Johnny and the man into the office.

They'd meet up later. He didn't want to escort him back down the hallway and across the head of the stairs, where there'd still be residents milling about and probably even the alleged child-abuser, who'd triggered the episode.

They passed through empty darkness between bunks. Johnny knew the way without a flashlight. Usually the flashlights didn't work. He walked slowly to avoid running into a resident coming towards them. He recognized where they were by the shapes of the bunks, sometimes by the shapes on top of them.

Some of the bunks were tented with towels, to the annoyance of Citizen Hearse, because they were always running short. Others were piled high with what appeared to be the contents of a house sale, against the rules. Each resident was supposed to have no more than two green garbage bags in storage, besides what he could fit in his locker. There was no room for storage. There weren't even enough lockers.

Johnny thought he recognized a stereo in profile under a blue shelter blanket. He knew whose bed they were passing. He'd been watching TV before the incident. That meant they were halfway. He made a mental note. To remind him to get rid of his things, before they got rid of him too.

Throwing out things was an ordeal. For things who supposedly had nothing, they had a lot, of things....

It was the same way in Emile Durkheim House, in Handy House, in all the psychomes. Johnny periodically cleared other residents' rooms as well as his own, of clothing they'd picked up from various charities. Bags went out to the trash. Occasionally someone noticed the difference, but no one complained. Easy come, easy go.

The storage room had shelves to the ceiling. When they were packed three layers deep, Johnny and some relief worker would have to do the job. Otherwise, it took hours to find anything. It was a mnemonic exercise, as they recognized on the labels the names of the departed, who'd died or been evicted or simply left.

Good riddance. There were their things, to the annoyance of Johnny, but the fascination of everyone else, whom they had to prevent from immediately ransacking the pile. If they took the clothing of someone who was still in the shelter, or who'd return and find them wearing it, there'd be an incident....

Margaret awaited them in the office. She was the acting supervisor, but she knew she got too excited. She said, deal with it.

Without discussing it, they agreed that the best strategy was to get the man out of the shelter without another incident. They said nothing about the police. They merely asked the man some questions, about what had upset him, which was essentially what he'd already told them. Lena put it in the incident report. They said it was a case of mistaken identity, and referred him to Satan House.

He insisted on going by taxi, so Lena called him one. Johnny waited with him in the TV room. The alleged child-abuser swaggered in, causing the man to jump up and lurch towards him, but Johnny and another resident intervened. With his eyes, Johnny told him to beat it.

The cab arrived after a few tense minutes. Johnny and another resident helped the man downstairs with his luggage and loaded it into the waiting car. The man told the driver where to take him. It wasn't Satan House. Johnny got the impression they were seeing him off on a long journey.

So long, sailor. Romeo could tell where he was on the Great Lakes by the smell. That must have saved on flashlights.

*****

A fat bald man with heavy black glasses was in the shelter. He wore a cheap tweed jacket that fit too tight. He didn't live there.

Johnny watched as he approached the residents, and they shook their heads. He was looking for someone.

Johnny stopped him at the door of the TV room. He said he was looking for someone with his suitcase. He'd loaned it to him at the bus station, to take care of till he found a hotel. The man gave him the address of Yucca Flats.

What kind of man arrived in a strange city and gave his luggage to a homeless stranger to take care of?

That kind stood before him.

He said the man with his luggage was Raj or Roger, bed 13.

There was no bed 13.

Johnny said, Come to the office.

He didn't want to come to the office. He wanted his luggage. Where was Raj, or Roger. He wanted to find him. He turned away from the TV room, toward the dorm.

Johnny moved in front of him. Private property! He could leave a message for Raj (or Roger) in the office, then he had to leave the building. If he didn't want to leave a message, he had to leave immediately.

I want Raj, he said. Where is he?

Johnny couldn't say. That was confidential.

Why couldn't he say?

He'd just told him. It was confidential.

Then he wanted his luggage.

Johnny said he had to leave the building, and started to move him toward the stairs.

Why couldn't he have his luggage?

He didn't have it. Now he had to leave the building, or he'd call the police.

Johnny walked him down the stairs. Before the door he started to object. Johnny kept moving, and got him out onto the sidewalk. Several residents were smoking. One on his way in paused for him to move, then when he didn't shoved him out of his way, swore, and went upstairs. That was Johnny's chance. He pulled the door shut behind him.

Back in the office he scanned a few old bed-lists. There was Raj Sing in bed 30. Well, it wasn't bingo. He made a note in the Common Log, not to admit the fat man.

Next week he read in the Log how someone matching his description was admitted the following morning. He left right after supper, with several bags of things. The residents immediately started to miss radios, leather jackets, running shoes. Which was too bad, because they needed them....

The worker had printed his name in the big, bold letters of a kindergarten drop-out: CHARLIE....

*****

Friday afternoon, when they were working in the kitchen Johnny gave Deane fifty dollars. He laid the bill on the counter.

So pink, he couldn't miss it....

At first Deane woldn't take it. He told Johnny to pick it up, before it got lost.

Johnny could tell he wanted it. He told Deane to buy himself something nice, for the weekend.

Deane grinned and put it in his pocket. Or did he grimace?

Now his pictures will go into one of those albums Johnny won't ever sell.

*****

A woman with bits of what looked like human bone in her tear-shaped glasses asked him, with a forced smile, how's business?

Johnny said, Fine.

A slow day, she suggested, glancing at the notebook on the table beside her. Spying.

So far that day he'd recorded five transactions, amounting to 20 dollars.

No, it's fine.

Fine, she repeated.

Just fine, Johnny insisted. Except for you....

*****

A florid, disheveled blond woman asked him the price of a dress he'd draped over a barrel outside.

Johnny said, 2 dollars.

She said, At that price she could use it for a costume.

She found a skimpy bathrobe. She asked Johnny if he would let her have it for a quarter. She'd decided that if he'd sell her the dress for 2 dollars, he'd sell her the bathrobe for a quarter.

She was wrong....

*****

O, they're beautiful.

So many pretty things!

I can really use them.

They're worth a fortune on E-bay.

All that ASS!

Pioneers of Alienation

*****

Discussing substitution with Romeo, racing around in his van. A mobile forensic lab. Looking for Trixie's friend in the suburbs.

Endless swathes of empty highway with Dough-nut Holes and Coffee Slimes every kilometer. Every second or third kilometer, a sprawling shopping-center, a self-serve.

After decades navigating the ocean, Romeo got lost in the suburbs....

*****

On the MBC Citizen Hearse's latest Zoncolite Girl reported the fall of Hogtown's Whoresell Enterprises, and the used headboard off Romeo's truck in the middle of the Hardener Distressway.

The Zsa Zsa Special!

With fleurs de lis!

We bring you in-depth coverage.... Getting close to the end of the downward pressure.... On this roller-coaster ride....

She sounded terribly concerned about the welfare of money in bank accounts and RRSPs. So far as anyone knew. Nowhere.

Dadania's flagship enterprise really just a glorified spider spinning optical fiber out of its guts.... Catching innocent Dadanians in its web....

That young man in the hockey jacket anxiously watching the stocks on the electronic billboards at Thing Street and Dung....

*****

The brokers talked on cell-phones over the internet at Thing and Dung. Farther down Thing Street, at the Buffer Inn Mall, the locos talked over the ether, without the aid of handheld devices....

Practically speaking there wasn't any difference, except the locos wisely tended to ignore the voices they heard....

Things who thought there was anything on the end of their cell-phones, keyboards, fax machines were delusional....

*****

Johnny told Romeo that the same principle drove their business that drove computers that drove sex: substitution.

He added some half baked adaptations of ideas stolen from Freud: how every substitution flowed from the first, which fathers taught sons, the substitution of Trixie for Mom, because Mom was taken....

Johnny realized that he was talking to somebody who'd never had a father to order him to do anything. Then he remembered, he'd never had one either. O, yeah....

There was more....

One substitution led to another, as disillusion followed delusion, like ponies at the Circus....

The Promised Land to the south was rank with disappointments that Romeo sold to Dadanians by the truckload. Johnny wondered where the saturation point was. It was behind them, a rapidly shrinking period. They were too far gone in excess. They would never catch up with reality. It would never catch up with them...

Writing was substitution....

*****

His pride and joy was a typewriter from the 20s. Its carriage was two feet wide. It only cost 10 dollars, but it weighed a ton and was very hard to move.

Of course, it didn't work, but it was BEAUTIFUL, with its black and gold enamel. It improved his typing....

It bore the label of The Unification (Typewriter) Company of Beijing.

*****

Deane all over the net....
Begging any identity he thought had tits and long hair for its naked pics....
Deane offering pics of his own bare tits and tight trapeze-artist's ass in exchange....
Trouble was, there was no way to make the party at the other end honor the deal....
Johnny understood this perfectly, being ever alert to ways of getting free things....
He was shocked by how earnestly Deane pleaded over the giant web....
O, please send me your picture....
Johnny was more shocked by how easily he tricked him.
Johnny asked Deane to send him his picture. Deane refused.
Are you gay? Johnny asked, when Deane refused again.
Give me your e-mail address.

*****

Deane came on line.
Johnny said, Hi, there.
Are you the Editor, Deane asked, of Mew Circus?
He wondered if that was some new periodical for animal trainers; he knew Deane was always writing these silly articles for circus zines. With gung-ho titles like, Zowee! Those Shanghai Pogo-Vaulters Sure Are Tops!
New Circus, Deane corrected himself. He obviously couldn't type either.
I sense you are guy, Deane continued. At first Johnny thought Deane thought he was Guillaume, then he realized it was another typo.
Go away, Deane commanded, with the austere authority of his beautiful metatarsus. By virtue of the same feature, Johnny couldn't.
I'm already away, Johnny explained, 10,000 miles away.
Good, Deane lithped. Thtay there.

*****

Doc Praetorius's asistant, Trixie Zane....
She appeared outside Johnny's thing emporium, demanding to know why he and Romeo hadn't delivered her things....
She had an ugly buffet, the veneer pealing off like corn-flakes, like something she picked up on the curb on garbage night....
It was....
She regularly picked the garbage, looking for FREE SHIT....
This one she'd actually paid them for, or so she said, but Johnny knew. She was lying....
She hadn't actually given them any money for years, then she walked into the store and bought something, hideously trashy and wrecked, for fifty bucks. She returned it for a credit, and had been trading on the same credit ever since, increasing it slightly after every transaction. She'd inflated the original fifty bucks to the price of a library table and a buffet. Then she blew it by leaving the library table for months, till Johnny sold it to somebody else. But the buffet was still there.
Johnny said they'd been calling her for weeks, to find out when she'd be home to take delivery.
She said they hadn't left any messages on her pager.
Johnny said he'd sat beside Romeo and watched him while he phoned her number. So her pager must be FUCKED.
So how am I gonna get my things. I just wanna get my things.
What things?
An armoir, a library table, a buffet.... A desk with a tooled leather top, delicate legs.... A marble-topped table, a commode, some French Provincial chairs....
Johnny noticed the additions.... He told her to come in and write down when and where they could deliver her stuff....
Instead of writing him a note, she harangued him.... How she and Doc Praetorius were LOVERS with GOOD TASTE, they liked what they liked, and they were tired of Johnny's harassments, ordering them to take away their shit, etc.... She said they were going to organize the customers and rise against him....
Trixie Zane was a PART of the NEIGHBORHOOD and a WOMAN OF ACTION ©....

She was RAVING. She was having a PSYCHOTIC EPISODE....

Johnny kicked her out of the store....

*****

Bozo's shopping sprees at the Circus....

Jack observed.... The shopping-cart with the FINE FOODS logo.... Abandoned on the sidewalk in front of their Psychome.... Bozo was possessive about that cart....

Jack told Johnny to bring it in off the sidewalk.... Stash it beside the porch.... Bozo'd throw a fit if he thought Johnny stole it....

If Johnny touched it.... Tried to move it.... He'd think he was stealing it right then.... Lumber downstairs.... Panting.... Heart condition.... Like that time the young punk tried to swipe it out of the yard....

Stupid punk would have got away with it too, only he had to announce himself....

Hey, he shouted. I can use that cart....

Not if Bozo had anything to do with it....

By the time the punk figured out how to open the front gate, Bozo was already in the yard....

He grabbed the cart back just in time....

The punk accused Bozo of stealing it himself....

Bozo told the punk to get lost....

Either way, Johnny couldn't win....

He shoved it beside the porch to wait for more books, Sanskrit, Chinese philosophy, The Kama Sutra....

The things Bozo had in his secret stash, his tickle-trunk in a derelict warehouse, in the former Massive Tractor Works....

Typical abandoned Thing Street property....

Everywhere desuetude....

*****

Johnny was working on his history of psychiatric extinction. He needed a consumer.

They gave him BABYFACE MARJORAM.

They said he'd changed.

So what if that scurrilous hate-mail he wrote for Doc Dildo Wingnut ruined Johnny Boy's career. It was cruel to deny him A SECOND CHANCE....

*****

At 17 he'd been an Eatone's Junior Pioneer. He relished the melodramatic contrast between the nimble-footed basket-ball playing young satyr he'd been, and the hairless, gynostatic, bitch-titted slut he became....

He used expressions like AMPHIBIOUS LANDING CRAFT to describe what was just an ordinary, run of the mill, psychopathic personality.

A blond-haired boy, a shining light, etc., etc....

Yeah, yeah, Johnny thought.

Strange that, depicting himself as a hypocrite (which didn't make him less one), he nonetheless spoke of himself being had by the system. The needy victim syndrome....

Johnny wished he'd get on with it. Tell him how they strapped electrodes to his tender naked temples, made his back-bone thrash like a burst fire-hose, shit like that....

Johnny hallucinated. Amphibious coelacanths flapped, leapt and crawled onto the Precambrian sea-shore, that resembled nothing so much as a Dadanian stump lot, to be treated by Big Nurse, with the contents of a gigantic aerosol can, property of THING STREET ASYLUM....

It was hydro-electric Zoncolite. They weren't cured, except as meat is. They were preserved, like fossils.

Johnny had seen pictures of Eatone's Junior Pioneers, in the kitschy old high-school yearbooks he studed whenever he felt nostalgic, or horny. They made Sylvia Plath stick her head in an oven and breathe: mooning over a dress shirt, a tie, short parted hair, a cow-lick and, of course, Deane's beautiful white-socked foot in a long, tightly-laced runner....

He saw why she did it. It was unbearable to be attracted to things like that....

Judging by their team photos, always on the next page, Eatone's Junior Pioneers had flabby thighs and calves, sparsely sprinkled with short black hairs. They weren't good to look at. They were better at making sales than love.

The guy before him wasn't even a good specimen of an Eatone's Junior Pioneer. In his 50s, in T-shirt and short-shorts, he resembled the Pillsbury dough boy.

Thing Street Asylum

He was stuffing his kisser with greasy romaine in one of those fake artiste joints that buzzed like shit-flies around Hogtown's pretentious galleries. Cured, all right.

*****

For 6 years Colonel J. Elliott had noticed the deterioration, the food, the filth, etc., at the loco Home for Incurables.

He was on friendly terms with the inmates, their necessarily secret ally: I see it all, but I must keep silent for YOUR SAKES:

> I got up concerts for them, played my phonograph, gave them money, food and literature, and spent all last Christmas and New Year's morning with them.... Had a hand shake, a word of cheer up and a Scripture card for every one of them, FOR WHICH I GOT THE THANKS OF THE BOARD! (1)

He broke his silence after the eviction of an incurable from her LITTLE HOME, on January 17, 1903. The eviction was the sudden confiscation and/or removal of the patient's personal belongings, loads of things, with which she had made her cell a home.

The patient was not so much evicted from the Home, as home was, in the form of things, from the Home. The debris left behind included photos, and the Colonel's own scripture cards. The removal was ordered by Mrs. Mortimer Clark, the First Lady Directress, Colonel Elliott's great foe in the ensuing controversy.

While the epigraph to his The Truth About the Home for Incurables, Toronto: Showing the Cause and the Remedy, Let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not (Gal. vi: 9), urges steadfastness and perseverance, Elliott poses rhetorical questions, with hysterical earnestness:

> are you going to let these wise, personal-sacrificing [sic], earnest, energetic, thoughtful and obliging Board of lies [sic] and mismanagers continue to oppress the patients and rob you!!! SHAME ON YOU IF YOU DO!!! (cover). (Colonel J. Elliott, The Truth About the Home for Incurables, Toronto: Showing the Cause and the Remedy (Toronto: Saturday News-Item Print, 1903)).

He was a muckraker, a yellow journalist, a sob-sister.

*****

For 5 dollars at J. Zeus Murphy's Thing Street Zombie Crypt Store. There it was! Abused by big burly Crypt Zombies. Johnny's first computer. The beige box with integrated monitor and hard-drive.

Doc Dildo Wingnut, lazy cock-sucker and no account, accompanied Johnny to buy it. For $2000. A typewriter! With a memory!

Johnny went into debt for it.

He suddenly noticed that the Crypt Zombies had smocks like butchers' aprons....

He strained himself removing the machine from the metal shelf and tenderly lowering it onto a dresser. Enormously heavy, considering that it was only a fractal as powerful as the cheapest computer being produced today. More really, virtually less....

When it was time to carry it home Doc Dildo absconded in his Chevy, leaving Johnny to hail a cab.

The last thing he needed was another burden. Romeo taunted him that he couldn't fit everything into one knapsack any more. He was getting worldly.

He kept thinking about what it had meant to him, how when he moved he wrapped it in towels and mailed it to his new address.

I'll take it, Johnny said.

The cashier gave him her usual spiel. This 5 dollar item was sold as is. It was non-returnable and non-exchangeable. It was Johnny's forever.

That was how he wanted it. Besides, he couldn't imagine anyone returning such a thing for 5 dollars. A digital albatross. It cost more than that in energy to lift.

*****

Johnny noticed a paratrooper's bag in the donations bin. He'd had one in Montage. It spoiled his chance to become a Don at Pawn's U in Lummoxville. He was supposed to meet Dean Forest (pron. "FAW-resstt") for a light collation before assuming his lectureship at $5 a class (baby needs chassubles).

Pioneers of Alienation

The Dean promised to meet him at the Depot, sporting a baby-blue Boy Choir blazer with an adorable gold crest over the left nipple. Johnny said he'd be in jeans and a black T-shirt, carrying the paratrooper's bag.

The very same.

It had come back to him!

No, it was more likely to be a delusion itself, than that particular paratrooper's bag, and it was very real. If it wasn't in the bin, Johnny was.

Unfortunately, that meant he couldn't buy it before one of the zombies rolled the bin into the sanctuary and Pricer waved her wand while clicking her heels three times.

He bent over the edge of the bin and gazed down, drooling. He might have been gazing over the edge of a precipice, at the Promised Land.

On a clear day, Buffalo, N.Y.!

There was something he wanted....

Glasses On a Rope said, get it and I'll sell it to you.

Johnny said, it's full of clothes.

No problem, Glasses assured him.

Already Dwyte Frye, Jr. was emptying it of neatly folded jeans.

$4, she said.

Half-Price Day! It really came back to him....

*****

Some joker playing with the typewriters on a wrecked mahogany desk in the doorway....

You are entering INTERZONE, he said in a pompous voice. Johnny fingered the BURROUGHS pin that he'd made out of the nameplate of an old adding machine.... He flourished it....

The joker said his grandfather actually invented it....

Johnny said he knew....

The guy bought 2 records and paid for them with a $5 bill, cheap Dadanian money, the fizz of some frock-coated monkey against a spyro-graphed background like Milton Bradley made it....

Weird-looking money, the guy observed....

With cheesy things on it....

Not Sir Winifred Ladylay....

The only....

She wasn't cheesy....

She was a F.O.P....

Yeah, come to think of it.... He examined the physiognomy on the bill.... Simian features all gussied up.... She DOES resemble a F.O.P....

F.O.P.s and idiots, that's all we got....

And spiritualists....

Yeah, table-turners.... Like

Yeah.... (in unison).... W.I.L.H.E.L.M. L.I.O.N.E.L. M.c.K.E.N.Z.I.E. Q.U.E.E.N....

That pretty in pince-nez.... Johnny conceded, grudgingly....

Dead of an anal hemorrhage at the mental age of eleven.

They found pince nez up his ass....

*****

After wasting yet another day on hopeless Lunatic Indexes and Case Histories among toothless senile dements in the Archives of Dadania (I'm always finding their yellowing dentures, in the photocopier), I scurried up Thing Street dodging Max the Butcher's assassins because I couldn't afford the streetcar, having squandered my last dollar on stamps for this letter to you, dear....

I do NOT, therefore, regret to inform you that I have posted a version of my book, Pioneers of Alienism and 50s Sci-Fi at Thing Street Asylum, 1850-1920, to [Johnny gave him a long road-map of a URL].

This is entirely because of your persistent failure to answer my queries regarding the status of my paper on that grand old charlatan and hick quack, the Nestor of Dadanian Alienists himself, Doc Joseph Workman....

I innocently submitted to The Annals of World Shrinkage. A COVEN of MENTAL HISTORIANS and their hangers on, Max the Butcher, J. Zeus Murphy, Bizz Kukzinksy, Babyface Marjoram, and the most infamous Mental Hell PIMP of them all, PROFESSOR C.LAMPRINI EEL, Ph.D., queued up in politest limy fashion, for a BANG at my ASS!

So much for Gentle Readers' comments and anonymous submission. It was a contract job....

But one murmur against their ring-leader, and I'm branded for life an arrogant young Turk, a cruel assassin.... The sacred annals of Mental History must not be made a hiding place whence to attack a PIONEER OF SOCIAL

CHANGE.... This from your anonymous reviewer! Who else but PROFESSOR EEL himself, that devotee of WORLD SHRINKAGE!

He was inaccurate when he said I disliked Eel. I hate his fucking guts....

As for Professor C. Lamprini Eel's colleagues in crime, Mickey the Pisser and Max the Butcher have gone down on each other ever since Mickey was Max's advisor in the School of Criminology and Social Work at the Mighty U of Titz. Mickey was writing panegyrics to the inventors of fever cabinets and insulin therapy. Max wanted to come out with some dirt on Chuck Handy, how he funded his Institute of Mental Hagiography with profits from a chain of psychomes he ran with some crook named Citizen Hearse. They were on a collision course and Mickey Pisser wanted that bursary from the Handy Institute. He wanted it very much. But if Charles W. Handy ever heard that one of his, Mickey Pisser's, carefully hand-sorted ephebes published such TOTALLY BIASED shit about him, he'd never get the dough, that's for sure....

Mickey told Max to withdraw his paper, or leave the School of Criminology and Social Work, never to rim his ass-hole more. That last part was unbearable, so Max yielded.

They've been going down on each other more than ever, and Max has become the greatest hagiographer of MENTAL HISTORY....

P.S. I especially resent something Eddie the Shortener let fall about my snide tone....

*****

Thanks for the dirty pics, pard. Sorry about our little tiff....

Flew up to Edmo Town last weekend for a round of crop dusting. At the Cow Palace they were eating hotdogs by the thousand, washing them down with Stetson-fulls of sody, belching and farting, like pigs in slops....

Well, the back forty's chock full of dandylions, so I reckon I better mosy on over and FRY them ornery varmints with my trusty CATTLE PROD. Bought it for two bits at the Local Women's Hygiene Committee's Annual Bake-Sale for Unwed Motherfucks. Still gotta wash my chaps and rustle me up some chow, so guess I'll hop to it. Don't want the Local Rate Payers Association to run me out of town by sundown.

I'll be your Daisy Miller.

*****

Thank you for your letter, which I was glad to find in my box this morning. I look forward to an interesting correspondence, with plenty of pictures.

I have had two books published. They are masterful monographs. The first is Gilding the Lily: The 18th-Century Panegyrist as Pander. It was published in 1994 by Krap Kollege Press, and it's really good shit. I stole the title from a couplet by the greatest pander of the age, Alapaloozah himself:

> Let Strephon sing of Celia's lays,
> I gild the lily, because it pays....

Panegyric is a kind of drivel, usually a poem (but not necessarily) which cons the boss with flattery. It works like this. The poet tells Alapaloozah,

> Look, Boss, you're one even-handed son of a bitch. The whole alley knows you saved The Butcher's ass, the time that bitching whore double-crossed him for that punk Strephon and he was broke and starving with a bunch of ex mental patients in a filthy Thing Street garret with a pox on his cock that would not crow for rosy-fingered day again and not a chamber pot to piss in....
>
> You saved that pimp's bacon, and I'm no friar. In case you didn't know it, I'm broke myself and living here in a Thing Street garret even worse than Max's. My neighbors weren't even released from Thing Street Asylum. They just eloped. For sure they weren't cured. For a living they geek chickens down at the Circus. Only now it's winter so they're out of work. All night I have to listen to them practising with WHITE SQUIRRELS. The squealing is unbearable. I'm afraid I'll never get this eclogue done, in which you appear as an especially beautiful well-hung Corydon, only straight.... Well, I guess that's all for now only if the shoe fits, wear it, as they say on Parnassus....

In the late 17th and throughout the 18th century this kind of writing was perpetrated by Samuel Daniel, Ben Jonson, Andrew Marvell, Jonathan Swift, and Charles Churchill. A fine bunch of whores. Lest I sound pedantic (I'm talking about my doctoral dissertation), Andy Marvell argued in The Rehearsal Transpros'd, a parody of a parody (Buckingham's The Rehearsal), for religious toleration for everybody except the Roman Whore, formerly of Babylon,

etc. He cadged a soft job teaching a theocratic Generalissimo's kids and in his spare time wrote a tract on the separation of Church and State.... His coy mistress was a boy.... Little T.C..... a flower....

My second book, Phalloi in Myrtle Dress'd: Toward a Rhetoric of Sodom, was published by the Fairy Dick University Press in 1998. You'll love it. It's dirtier than it sounds, and it discusses a lot of scatological and libelous but true tracts about the rich and powerful who were almost as great swine as they are today.... The kind of things Churchill spat on Akenside sucked up to....

Akenside! the greatest poet of the age and the worst fawning toady, lick-spittle, and pander.... Terms like homosexual didn't exist back then, so he turned nature into a porno-palace for neo-classical ephebes in Liberace drag....

It might be historically inaccurate to say that Akenside was a notorious faggot, when he was only an infamous molly and nancy-boy....

His long-time same was Matthew Dyson, a political hack and turn-coat supporter of the Jacobite Earl of Butte....

Tobias Smollett outed them both in Humphrey Clinker....

Pioneers of Alienism and 50s Sci-Fi at Thing Street Asylum should be more accessible to you, a sometime Treasury Department analyst, I.T. specialist, fighter pilot, etc....

I'm thinking of getting that great Benefactor of Madkind, J. Zeus Murphy, founder and first president of Zombie Crypt Stores, to post it to a website....

It explores the meanings of Asylum and mental illness in texts by the principal quacks and lunatics of Thing Street Asylum, aka The Casino for Mental Hell and Addiction.

I was inspired to write when I moved into permanent exile here on Thing Street, Hogtown's Virtual Asylum and Secret Ghetto for present and former psychiatric patients, blacks, gays, and all other kinds of weird and extravagant marginal things (including fag writers), like me. Although the book discusses events from 1850-1920, what happened then was just an early form of absorption of the Asylum and its poor by the clinic, in its latest infernal incarnation, The Sharke Institute and its myriad satellite psychomes....

The Sharke Institute's great charlatan and mountebank, Professor C. Lamprini Eel, hired Max the Butcher of the Department of Criminology and Social Work to organize his d-gen-rats against my masterpiece. They hadn't even read it, but they ran around Hogtown tearing down the notices, ripping them up, pissing and shitting on the pieces. Max had his own official history called Never Had It So Good that all the shrinks got together and backed in an expensive glossy coffee-table edition, about patients tooling around the beautifully landscaped psychotropic gardens in golf-carts....

Max's feebs never read that either, otherwise they'd have revolted against his book too, like it was the Frankenstein monster of mental history and they were the loco yokels with the home-made incendiary devices....

With Max the Evil Baron stinking like a thorazined pole-cat and nattering insanely about l-living in t-t-tu-MUL-tuous t-t-times....

In a burning Kirkbride Institution....

The chapter on The Venerable Nestor of Dadanian Alienists, Ole Doc Joseph Workman and the early form of Sci-Fi he pioneered at Thing Street Asylum, was accepted by Royale Portly at the U.R. Welcome Sanatorium, but the shrinks got him....

I suppose from his perspective there was no incentive, since there wasn't any money in it....

*****

But seldom history impinges,
the old gate hangs on broken hinges.
Thanks Mr. Reagan, Mr. Ping
whose nature, carcass, rot we sing.
The zeitgeist moved postmodern Pindar
who tracked no Greeks, whose stars were cinder
who never followed any sports
if any, frequented law courts.
He fondly hoped to reconcile
a set of opposites by style.
Like prince and people; and to show
the powerful, as per Foucault
that power was always from below.
To the new order, poetry meant
only a subsidized apartment.

*****

Thing Street Asylum

Many thanks for your latest communique. Always a pleasure, I'm sure....

As for Pioneers of Alienism and 50s Sci-Fi at Thing Street Asylum....

Apart from any reservations I might have regarding your principal thesis that that much-loved Nestor of Dadanian Alienists, Good Ole Doc Joseph Workman was a life-long secret masturbator, this year our publisher leapt off the platform in the underground, into the path of the onrushing locomotive he had given up waiting for.

So do be patient.

It pains me to add that my personal secretary, Ms. Haversham, shot herself at the news. Consequently I am typing this letter myself.

While I have been rather preoccupied with merging this great institution with the world's richest drug cartel, I think you will appreciate that typing this letter is more work than I have done in years. Upon its completion I shall doubtless have to retire....

Therefore, I shall NEVER find time to read your MS in the foreseeable future, so I have popped it into the mail, forestalling any further intemperate hate-mail.

Sorry to do this to you, JOHNNY!

Best of luck placing it. Up yours....

*****

Deane flew in from Rome. Johnny gave him a souvenir, that he bought from Worthless World. For a loony...

After sleeping in his bed for 10 years, Johnny'd finally summoned the courage to invite him for a date.

Well, a coffee

He was very handsome. He was as tall as a modern building and amazingly fit for the Seagram's Tower. He had a good foundation. Sturdy shoes.

They discussed THE YOUTH. It was natural (or unnatural, depending on your opinion of nature). Deane was probably fucking them, and vice versa.

Johnny wanted to fuck Deane (as usual). At the very least he should have been able to figure out what THE YOUTH had, that he didn't. It would have been obvious to anyone else but Johnny.

Johnny had been swearing at Dadania.

Deane reminded him. It was a thing of the past. Norrie Freed and the U of Titz. That jet-laged colonial mentality. Swallowed whole in the Gulf of St. Lawrence before they even made it to quarantine.

A fading Daguerreotype.

Johnny hoped so.

He remembered a date with Porko. If you could call it that. One of many low-life trysts. They been haranguing one another for hours when they noticed they had an audience.

THE YOUTH weren't used to conversation.

Talk, the one thing he had they didn't.

Substitution....

*****

Johnny decided he was wasting time. Donating his masterpiece to the Godwill Zombies was pointless.

He could see the stupid cow dumping Pioneers of Alienism in the shopping cart, with obselete encyclopaedias.

She spared Harlequins, anything by P/Bigge Shitte Allwood.

He met the native guy, Marvin. He'd risen to Lead Zombie, at the Crypt. He asked him if he wanted to buy a copy of his book.

Marvin recoiled, horrified.

Johnny got letters. E-mails, at least. One....

From someone who found Pioneers of Alienation in a bin on the sidewalk in front of Books, Magazines, Videos near the U of Titz.

So far his reader liked the book.... She sounded like a young student....

Porko said if they were women he'd impersonate him, say he wrote it.

The clerk must have been surprised when Johnny's fan approached, with the cerlox tome. It wasn't one of theirs. Foreign! He didn't know what to charge for it, so he suggested one dollar.

Most of the books in the bin cost more, even the paper-backs. True, Johnny's cost $25 at the photocopier, but it looked cheap, and disreputable. It was so big, it nearly burst the cerlox binder. It was like an angry pimple, about to burst.

Pioneers of Alienation

Asking a dollar was really supremely generous, compared to throwing it in the trash after a brief exorcism, which he watched the clerk perform at Worthless World. Crossing himself and muttering a lot of Latin, like Hanke Panke at the Pontifical Institutel, before he got busted....

A few times he'd rescued copies from the nackers's cart, on the way to underprivileged 3rd World readers they insisted, but Johnny knew. It was the Party Elite in Beijing. They relished his shit....

Or maybe landfill sites.

If they thought the promised land was like Johnny's book, they'd stay home and never rise up.

Back in the Annex, those cuties. Guys in short-shorts, capri pants, shower shoes. Almost made him hard, if he wasn't so old.

At Books, Magazines, Videos, it was so cavernous nobody noticed him, publishing Thing Street Asylum, sneaking it into Alternate Press Section.

His only alternative. Indeed, his last resort....

He bought some music books in the basement. A biography of Leadbelly, Roland Gelatt's history of the phonograph, and a Victor catalogue from 1927. At the cash he asked if they had any old, black & white movies. Or used Criterions. They invited him to come behind the counter and look. He had a big advantage, being tall. One of the female clerks flirted, if he wasn't so old, so gay....

Then he decided to do a Thing Street East edition. He rode the Thing Car into another slum like Porkdale, with more flops and dives. Even older....

There were used book stores, a good sign.

There was even a Worthless World, with a Rare Books shelf at the back. He published Thing Street on it, and had the rare pleasure of immediately witnessing its sale. To a well-dressed woman. Designer glasses, capri pants.

He kept meeting the same cuties on his daily rounds. He watched for him. He'd see him entering the Sally Anne ahead of him, or scouring books and media in Worthless World, when he was in housewares.

He was very handsome. Dark hair and eyes, rugged face. He wore shorts year-round, except for the bitterly cold days in February, when he wore Capri pants, and army socks. His long, lanky calves, were thickly furred with short, dark hairs.

They finally met again. Johnny and the stunner in Capri pants. Johnny was checking out the electronics section. Gadgets in baggies hung from the wall, like dead vampire bats....

He'd found a coal-oil lamp that someone had electrified.

An imitation, he ejaculated thoughtlessly.

Silk cord, he said with the over-determined accents of a wounded faggot, holding it up like a dead rat's tale.

Do you think so? That was also an imitation.

It's from the 40s, he asserted. That was the New Golden Age, for faggots. Who else would have chosen it? WWII, the Holocaust, Nanking....

I wanted to give you this, he said. Presenting him with a copy of Thing Street Asylum. There was no point arguing with a lunatic, who needed one....

Oh, he exclaimed. The priss! Are you sure you want me to have it?

Well, on second thought.... Was there something about him he should know?

There was. This was his day off; otherwise, he was with THE MOUNTIES....

He posted advertisements for Pioneers of Alienism and 50s Sci-Fi at Thing Street Asylum, on Thing Street.

Stapling them to the poles of the Hell Telephone Company, he confronted other crazies out pimping, for their tarts.

He recognized the promoter of the loco Film Fest, devoted to Jane Jacobs.

Reginald Hore in lederhozen, with a riding crop.

He heard Johnny's heavy-duty staple-gun, and approached. Checking out the competition.

He said he should use a smaller stapler, or ruin his hands.

Johnny's hands had done worse things, but they weren't what was driving him blind....

Few things talked to him, noticed him.

By Mahmoud Fukabuk's, Johnny was stapling his poster to a Hell Telephone pole armor-plated with staples. Under it, a heavy-set woman in black squatted, panhandling, with her boy-friend. A stocky, bearded man in a very clean, white T-shirt, was talking to them.

The boy-friend looked up when Johnny approached, and removed a poster and the Stanley staple-gun from the green, army-surplus paratrooper's bag.

I hate staplers, he said.

Johnny assured him, he wouldn't have to put up with it for very long.

The man who looked like a social worker laughed.

He's gotta do, what he's gota do, observed the woman in black. The boy friend laughed, too.

What is it, asked the worker?

Thing Street Asylum

A book, answered Johnny. Pioneers of Alienation and 50s Sci-fi at Thing Street Asylum.

I love sci-fi, said the boy friend, reading the poster. My favorite.

So download it.

A few door doors east, a white-haired woman, crossing Thing Street, noticed him, and asked if he wrote it.

He was tempted to say, he only took dictation. He said, yes, he wrote it.

She said she'd bought a copy from the Sally Anne. It was on top of the shelf, facing out. Was that, presentation, she queried, archly.

Yes, he said. She'd hate some parts, like others.

Thanks, she said. She continued west, down Thing Street.

For what, he wondered.

*****

Getting off the Ground Zero Bus at Thing and Dung. Johnny saw his posters covered over by The National Socialist Cabal of Dadania's advertisements for Roach Nite, awarding Citizen Hearse First Prize.

Thing Street Asylum was the biggest, the worst slumlord on Thing Street, with Citizen Hearse's resorts, Oakridge, Yukka Flats, Ground Zero, etc., a close second.

That's why he tore down the next poster he saw. He heard a fag squeal behind him, when he saw him do it. He looked like he sounded: long tight trench-coat like he'd been screwing a P/Bigge Banker behind the Worst Dadanian Borgia Palace and ran away with his clothing. He must have discarded his Gucci (c) loafers however, because he was wearing white canvas fruit booties.

Y-y-you m-must be C-citizen Hu-uh-hearse, he stammered. He was breathing hard, like he was going to come any moment. Or piss himself, more likely.

Johnny destroyed the next poster they came to. The faggot screamed. Johnny proceeded to the next telephone pole. He extended his right hand to the waiting poster, which would have been his third, when, to everyone's amazement, he inculcated himself between them like Lyton Strachey.

I like this one, he said. In fact, I love it, flinging himself against the pole like he wanted to fuck it.

Johnny paused. This would have been as opportune a moment as any, to theorize. He maintained such functions as Roach Nite were mere carnival, serving to distract the clients of Thing Street from the long Lent of their crummy so-called lives.

Who pays you, he demanded instead. The young man merely gawked at him.

It's the National Socialisr Cabal of Dadania, right?

By his wide-eyed expression, Johnny knew. By then it had started to rain. Enough fun, he'd better get home.

First, he wanted the fag to know. He didn't even know how to call it. He couldn't possibly be Citizen Hearse! Where was his top hat, his opera cloak, riding crop?

He turned, to continue down Thing Street. He was pelted with droplets from the fag's parasol, which he realized he was shaking over Johnny's head.

He followed him bitching and scolding down Thing Street, wanting to see if he'd demolish any more posters. There weren't any, till right outside Emile Durkheim's neo-classical Edwardian portico.

Johnny reached for it. The fag started hopping and scolding on the other side of the street, like a sqirrel. Johnny withdrew his hand. He spared that one, not out of mercy. He didn't want him to come over.

He watched him from his third floor dormer window, pacing up and down Thing Street, waiting to see if Johnny'd come out again, and start tearing down more Roach Nite posters. Johnny figured he was the organizer. He'd probably be the only participant. Johnny imagined him sitting in his trench coat in the back row of the cavernous hall, empty except for....

Citizen Hearse....

He'd have to walk slowly up the aisle on to the stage to award him the Golden Roach (solid brass) again this year.

*****

Johnny sold three copies of his asylum book....

He put copies on a U.S. army surplus chair and stuck a big, bright red FOR SALE sign over it: $5, at cost, autographed!

He watched as two women paused and examined a copy. He heard one of them say she'd get it, but didn't have any money.

Her friend said she had 4 dollars....

The first woman said she'd come back and get it, after she went to the bank machine in the 7-eleven. Johnny let her have it for $4.

He stood for a few minutes reading one of a stack of copies that Johnny had placed inside, on an end-table decorated with fleurs de lis....

I've been in there myself, he said. But you're the first man I ever met from Thing Street Asylum, who actually wrote about it....

He gave Johnny 5 dollars....

The third copy went to a man in corduroy and tweed, with a pencil-thin lady-killer moustache....

He said he was looking for 8-tracks. He stood a long time over the pile of books on the end table.

He said it looked like a really interesting book. He wondered if Johnny could give him a receipt. He would put it on his expense account.

Johnny said, sure.

Then he asked him to tell him, in a sentence, what it was about....

Johnny paused and scratched his head. He was about to say it was about the way the doctors exploited ideas of madness and the asylum for their own ends, while ignoring the needs of the things they were supposed to serve.

Instead, he said typewriters, gramophones, waterwheels, clockwork, turbines....

I thought you were just another fucking academic writer, who didn't care....

He thanked him, shook his hand, and left.

Marek Finkelburgher, Managing Director of the U of Titz P....

*****

The Book Lady rolled out her shopping cart of books and cds twice every afternoon, at 3 and 4:30. The Teacher and Johnny waited. In Jewelry and Furniture, respectively. Jewelry was farthest from Books, and The Teacher wanted to get there first, for FIRST PICK. He didn't know how she knew, but when The Book Lady rounded the corner of the cd aisle, The Teacher was usually on her way, or already there, with a shopping cart of her own. She used it like the cattle-prod on a locomotive, to get close to the merchandise, and push everyone else away.

The Book Lady let The Teacher rummage in her cart, for a particular cd or dvd she'd spotted. She had good eyesight, bad taste. She thought Barbara Streisand could sing, and Josh Roben.

The Book Lady told him not to touch anything. She said, the cds will be on the shelf in a few minutes, if he'd please wait. She said nothing if The Teacher was there. Johnny waited for The Teacher, which fortunately wasn't long. The Book Lady expressed her frustration, by crushing his hand under a pile of Josh Roben disks. Teacher's FAVORITE....

Johnny wondered if The Book Lady hated all men, or just him.

She said, the cds will be on the shelf in a few minutes, with the fussy, mousy air of an old-fashioned executive assistant to her mail-boy.

That was how she was, after a computer replaced her. Her boss got the computer when she had her Change of Life. She got skinny, her hair turned white. Computers didn't have breasts and nice hair, but then neither did she ANY MORE. It wasn't coincidence. She couldn't compete, she had to work for Worthless World, Thing Street, Porkdale, Dadania.

At first she was grateful Worthless World took her in, when the boss threw her onto Thing Street. It was like O.T., only it wasn't working. Customers like Johnny were bad for Mental Health. He made her sick. He said, just say the same thing to everyone else. He was worse than her old boss, who threw her over. For a machine! Johnny would've thrown her over for one lousy cd, and sworn at her for not getting out of his way.

She couldn't believe it. Someone could be so rude. To her! It was the Ministry, all over again. How come nobody flew a Boeing through THEM, when they fired her? She asked him, what did he say? Johnny didn't understand. She meant, please rephrase it. Instead, he repeated. Just say the same thing to everyone else. That was no way to talk to her, she shouted. She'd report him!

He knew Worthless World was a Hearse Operation. Citizen Hearse hired clients from his own psychomes and shelter franchise. He clawed back the measly pittance he paid them in rent, and charged their wages to the Ministry of Health, as THERAPY.

The Manager failed Anger Management. Johnny'd seen his goons drag trouble-makers into the parking lot, and deal with them. Johnny backed down.

He hung around, hoping to see The Teacher get THE TREATMENT.

In a school....

Giving a lesson one afternoon....

*****

Thing Street Asylum

Always a scam. Johnny loitering on his Thing Street porch. Talking to Bozo. His house-mate. About crazies. Present company excluded.

They'd heard each other raving.

They weren't kidding anybody. Not even one another. Oh, well. At least they weren't quarreling over a fifty-cent patchouli-scented air-freshener. Like last time.

When Bozo got a lot higher than the second floor. Johnny wasn't sure if it was psychotropic medication, bad diet, or bad hygiene. Or all three.

Johnny went into the bathroom to pee. It was what he smelled when the plastic handle of a cheap frying pan started to melt over the flame of the next burner. Cyano-electric....

Scalp tingling, hairs rising on the nape of his neck, as he stood there shaking his dick, wondering if he smelled almonds, if he would have an erection, if he wouldn't get the antidote in time, if he only had moments to live....

What better way to spend them, staring at that ugly green shelf behind the toilet, asking when was the last time somebody scrubbed it with cleanser....

So Johnny paid a visit to the Philippino dollar-store. He bought the foulest air-freshener he could find. He opened it. It fizzed. It was caffeinated. He put it in the bathroom on top of the radiator. The heat accelerated the effervescence. It smelled like Deane's dirty gym socks.

He couldn't wait for the idiot to fuck off and let him think about Deane's toes. All eight of them....

*****

Loser, he was thinking, when his fond reverie was interrupted by the fire alarm. Hearse bought it right after the Battle of Berlin. It obviously never saved anyone. Johnny figured it was the Tibetans again. Their tea lights set it off.

He couldn't stand the loud noise, so he went downstairs again, to the winking Cyclops eye on the yellow control box, inside the Thing Street door.

At the top of the stairs he heard his neighbor's chain locks rattling. Then as he descended the dark-varnished stairs, he heard his cane tapping behind him.

Porko was on the step with Freke, awaiting instructions from Citizen Hearse. Johnny opened the door, so he could hear the alarm's high-pitched screams. He'd forgotten Porko was deaf! His neighbor joined them, shaking his cane.

He had to shout to make him understand. The alarm!

Porko said that was SERVICE INTERRUPTION.

Johnny wondered. They were all mentally ill. Catatonic. Stoned on $CAMH meds that The Citizen sold wholesale to Fellini and The New Wave Boys to cut for the Youth from the Orphanages that lined Beastly all the way to Lake Hogtarry.

They were going to sit there and parse the tocsin. Army, Navy, Air?

Hmmm. Not cops. Not ambulance, or Mental Hell related. Must be, FIRE!!!

Porko dialed the Bat Phone. The Citizen was engaged. With Trixie shoving crack up his butt-crack. All right, he'd send one of his assassins over.

Porko fled to the Beastly door, to roll with the swine.

Pesch and Spoerrie were rutting and squealing so loud they couldn't hear the alarm. They hated Johnny, he was always complaining. Why couldn't he be like them? Just get STONED! In a huff, they retired.

Johnny was looking for Citizen Hearse's carefully hand-picked assassin. His thug, his goon. He passed the Superintendent's suite. Trixie wasn't cooking The Citizen's ass, after all! There she was, in Porko's doorway.

A little girl, her big hair limp and scaggy, spooning warm yogurt into little her doll face.

Johnny met The Citizen's poker-faced assassin emerging from the cellar, his carpenter's apron full of torture devices. Johnny asked him. Did you FIX IT?

He said, no. Couldn't find the problem.

Johnny said, not GOOD enough! This wasn't the first time....

It was tenants. Pulling the fire switches.

Johnny didn't think so. The switches activated the GONG OF DISASTER, the BELL OF BERLIN. He didn't appreciate him passing the buck, blaming tenants. Already so VICTIMIZED!

He shrugged. He wasn't the expert....

Johnny pounced. That was all he needed to hear. GET the expert....

*****

They had time to sit around and talk. Gabriel was with them. Betty came out for a few minutes, wondering if Deane would let her watch him lift weights. It was her favorite thing.

Deane said he'd do twenty flexes, but started to slow down at thirteen. He made it to seventeen, then returned the weights to Betty, exhausted.

Betty smiled. He couldn't fool her. Ladies don't lift weights.

Deane pulled the sleeve of his sports shirt up over his lean bicep. Feel, he commanded. Muscle. Betty touched it gently, blushing. Wow, she said.

He was hard....

Quit stalling, Deane said. He was holding the door open, for her to go.

Am I ugly? Betty asked all of a sudden.

You're cute as a button. He touched the flat end of Betty's nose. Go!

Betty lurched off down the hall, blowing her brains out with her finger.

*****

Gabriel was deluded that he had a manufacturing job. That would have been a step up. In the New Millennium, it meant security and dignity.

Gabriel wanted Johnny to do up his schedule. They spent a lot of time at the little patio table, filling in the days of the week.

Deane was getting ready to visit the doctor. It had something to do with his knees. That, and the fact that it was getting warm, prompted him to get into shorts.

How do I look? he asked Gabriel, smiling. He laughed.

Gabriel said nothing.

Johnny thought he looked great. He was lanky, with beautiful long legs that were slightly too thin. They were lightly covered with dark hair that glistened in sunlight. Otherwise, they looked smooth. The puffiness around his knees, like the bandage under the brace and the heavy black brace itself, only made him more attractive. At first he, didn't say anything either.

Johnny noticed that he was still wearing the black socks that he'd worn with the jeans.

Black socks, he said. They make you look like a banker taking the afternoon off. Pretty nerdy.

Deane agreed. He returned to the bathroom. When he got back his feet were bare in his running shoes, and he carried the socks in his hand. He had crazy ankles. He stuffed the socks into his khaki bag.

Better? he asked.

This time Gabriel said, Yes.

Just before going, Deane stood over them to see what they were doing. He read off the days of the week, pausing before Thursday, mocking Johnny's painstaking. He was helping a man remember the days of the week....

For a non-existent manufacturing job....

Let’s see if you can.... spell....

*****

Deane strode out of the library. His Khaki bag hung over one partially exposed (hairy) shoulder, his mauve Bermudas billowed over powerful ivory thighs, his leg-hairs rose black and deciduous against trunk-like calves, partially stripped after wintry defoliation, where cruel denims like famished fawns had nibbled at his bark....

His sockless feet rejoiced at barely remembered thrill of naked soles on canvas shoes.

He didn't bother to hold the door for Johnny. He slammed it in his kisser.

Deane's foot went on-line. With sweating hooves of hairy-thighed jocks dancing on invisible high-wires. Deane's foot tap-danced through cyberspace on the ends of someone's fingers. Deane's foot was there and it wasn't.

The trapeze artist of Johnny's dreams. Busted in his Big Top with a blow from a brazen knuckle. Under the canvas for a month. Who knows where? Emerging with his formerly raven-black mustachios and his wavy permed hair streaked with gold as if he'd flown too close to the sun....

Deane's foot was in the picture of his feet tucked under his soaring body like (wounded) birds’ feet. Deane's foot was and wasn't there.

The promise of all human potential.

*****

Crazy Jane's latest Dialogues of the Dumb. Thinks she's Plato Jr. Theorizes that economies resemble ecosystems.

Yankee free-trader at heart, assures us. Economies connected to everything else. Values survive.

Wishful thinking.

How do we manage a diversified economy? How do we produce goods with a sustainable future?

Whatever the government screws up, the market corrects!

Thing Street Asylum

Eureka! Crazy Jane's dogma.
Feel the constant positive change....
The good vibe....

Crazy Jane's baboon kisser....

No argument for progress....
More and more urbanized....
Condos....
Vertical concrete asylums, full of The Beneficiaries of Global Economic Development....
Self-polluting porno-pic Yuppie wankers, brought to you by Hydro....

Want to help the economy....
Want to help the environment....
Want to help the homeless....
Want to help themselves....

Just as dirty as everyone else....
Dirtier....

Not a whiff of Deane's foot!

Artificial intelligence would prove as difficult and crazy as real.
The artificial foot would sweat, stink, and itch at least as bad as Deane's, without the (considerable) charm.

Too many wankers typing away....

Real feet getting smellier in socks washed less often, the locos squatting in laundomats, using washers as cupboards, dryers ovens....

The more virtual the feet in cyberspace, the dirtier the feet on Thing Street, like mutually sustaining opposites....
Like straight and gay. Yahoo and Houhynmn.
Cyberfeet and streetfeet.
After an afternoon of digital Laputa, a dirty slab of salted sole....

Only a typical greasy spoon on a typical greasy Hogtown corner. Suddenly, a trendy coffee franchise occupying the same space. Another, and another. The competition in the economic settlement, the habitat, the arena, i.e., the economic equivalent of the ecosystem....

Crazy Jane whining on the Milquetoast Morning Show. Her old-bag corn-pone cronies got kicked out of her favorite hotshot latte joint in the groovy Annex.....
Full of gradstudents, postdocs. Repulsive, low-life, deadbeat defaulting scum!
Bought out by some glow-ball franchise.
Crazy organized a cartel. Groovy rich bitches, started a campaign.
We want our morning latte at hotshot's! They drove that evil-fuck franchise out of town! At least out of the Annex.
What a triumph!

For Crazy Jane economic diversity meant a bunch of flabby old dykes sipping skinny lattes brewed from shade-grown fair-trade beans with milk from a micro-dairy.
Making the world safe for hags like her....
But not HER, Johnny prayed.....

Nattering. The future was not big. The future was little. Making things grow.
Like exports....
They grew, all by themselves....
Callers phoning in with heart-warming anecdotes....
How their little micro-economies were getting bigger, transformed by all this wonderful diversity....

Till some cynic phoned in full of hate. It was all an ILLUSION....
They published his address, on the internet...

Behind superficial diversity loomed global homogenization....

Pioneers of Alienation

King Kong, behind a miniature of the Empire State....
Looking a lot like crazy, or her grandson....

Even Crazy Jane had to admit, manufacturing was disappearing from North America....
No computers Made in America....
O, oh!
But, she insisted, specialization without diversity had no future...
That was dogma....
It sure had a present though!

Dadania's wealth no longer raw material. Subsidies to old industries worth more than the industries themselves.

Start a craze for pince-nez, asylums, hacks....
Deane's foot in a big stinking safety boot.... Should've been Bill Gates's golf shoe....

The Japs and the Jerries showed us the way....
Get rid of the gas-guzzling Mobile Dick cars!

Johnny got disgusted. Threw the radio against the wall and jumped up and down on it. So satisfying.

But nothing as satisfying as Deane's foot!

The digital Laputa and The Beijing Footworks. Pollution-spewing factories in a million square-mile newly reclaimed suburban toxic waste-dump swampland.
The latest pirated hi-tech software, and coolies!
Steam-powered micro-chips!
Super Yuppies. Jah Lo See's Uncle Warner, in his stretch limousine, passing a hundred thousand sampan coolies on his way to The Compound. To counterfeit the latest digital version of Deane's Foot.

So much for Clazy Jane and her bullshit theories about micro-economic diversity! What if everything's little and

The Same?

A billion Chinese hopping into the Red Dawn of the New Millennium as one body on Deane's Foot....

*****

I got a lotta projects. Always on the go. Talk all the time on the net, to dozens of experts in every field: geology, prospecting, engineering, accounting, and DRILLING, DRILLING, DRILLING....
I got a small computer application system....
I got a reservoir simulation model for a oil field of 772 oil wells, where CO2 is being pumped in by pipeline from the U S of A and drilled into the ground till the rich dinosaur blood gushes out the oil wells on the other end....
I got a fixed asset inventory system, to better manage the millions and billions in oil field equipment the corporations leave rotting in the middle of this here prairie.... I can tell them whether they should redeploy their assets elsewhere, or just sell the shit....
I got an administrative system to help management do succession planning for key positions in the company. With this software I can identify potential up and comers, general managers, VPs, and other motherfuckers....
I got a software career path for mapping the necessary experience straight up the ass-hole of the CEO, and predicting the risks of getting someone trained in an all the latest tonguing and rimming techniques, only to have the little cocksucker elope with another corporate pimp and a suitcase full of stock options....
I can cap your ASS....

*****

In his report for 1866 Workman attributed six deaths to General Paresis. He seemed willing to allow that while it appeared to be more common, that could be a function of more accurate diagnosis, due to its getting more attention. However, many general practitioners were still unaware of it.
The name, General Paralysis, was partly responsible for the failure to diagnose the condition. For one, at the onset of the disease, the patient was apparently free from any paralytic affection, or even characterized by an unusual degree of physical excitement: more active, lively, and robust with more mental energy than ever in his life before.

Other characteristics of the disease, such as the patient's voracious appetite, and general apparent good health, appeared to have nothing to do with paralysis.

The earliest symptom of the disease which appeared to coincide with its designation was the defective articulation of speech due to the impairment of the lateral muscles of the tongue (14). This early manifestation was usually accompanied by delusions of wealth or some other incredible attribute....

*****

Having said that....

I AM a cuddler, with the right guy....

*****

Velvet called Johnny's name when she saw him coming up the walk at night.

He'd be on the porch and hear her disembodied voice in the dark. She'd sit on the second floor balcony. Frederick (not Fred) or Gabriel would join her. Michael would sit by himself on the tiny third floor balcony, smoking among the gargoyles.

In the morning the yard would be littered with dented Coke cans.

None of the bedrooms was air-conditioned. Johnny wondered if the landlord was afraid of elopements, but that was silly. There was no need to lock the windows when tenants were free to use the door. They could come and go at any hour. Many exercised that freedom.

Lance, for example. He was a big, courteous man from some island, Johnny didn't know which. Haiti or England. What was the difference?

His was one of the bodies that he regularly saw flashing on the way to the toilet. He was used to his bare ass. He would hear him leave early in the morning. Lance would usually go downtown to City Hall. He had a complex about Mayor Gasman. He believed he was in some kind of trouble. He probably was....

Lance smelled like a dog. He smelled like a dog that lived outdoors and slept in the grass. After waiting for the mayor Lance would go to sleep in some park. Johnny never saw him do a laundry. He'd throw it in the garbage and get new clothes at the pound store. At a dollar a pound it was probably cheaper to buy them. He saved his money for cigarettes.

Velvet was another story. Johnny knew as soon as he recognized her voice that Velvet wanted a cigarette. She was too embarrassed to ask outright because she already owed him and she was basically a good woman. She'd promised to pay him back as soon as she got her money from the hospital. She'd always done so before, but not this time. She was slipping. When Johnny gave her five dollars off the little roll he kept in his pocket she got nostalgic for the times when she had money. She wasn't jealous. She just remembered the times when she had a roll too. She appreciated the memory almost as much as the money. The memory would last longer. She'd spend the five dollars immediately. There'd be a feeding frenzy for cigarettes. She couldn't say no.

Johnny offered her a couple of cigarettes. She came downstairs and stood and talked for a while on the porch.

She'd had a manufacturing job in the 70's. It was a better world. There were better drugs in it. She and her boyfriend took them in their basement apartment, listening to rock. Her friend shot someone after an argument and wound up in an asylum for the criminally insane.

Velvet was cruising down the highway on the back of someone's Harley and it was as if one of her thoughts leapt out of her head into the road in front of them and pulled them through the windshield. Johnny imagined her, frozen in the headlights of an on-rushing thought. She was mental roadkill.

First Deane, then Velvet....

*****

The entire mad nation. Congregating every noon hour on the fire-escape at Shalom Drop-In Pizza Parlor Food Bank. Waiting for hours for the free cookies after the prayer meeting. For the Peak Freaks baked by Lady Eatone's very own satiny Lily Whites. With a little help from her Freak Fairies....

Johnny saw the sign that one of the cookie-distributors had stuck in the window beside the Daily Saying: LIVE/WORK SPACE.

Everyone on Thing Street thought he was an artist, but was just some kind of nut....

They dociley queued up, politely narrating their Case Histories....

Pioneers of Alienation

*****

Those shit-houses in Crockville.
He scrawled tits and cocks in slops all over those shit-houses in Crockville.
Then he blew up General Cock's Egyptian Monument....

The Major shot in the dick during a moonlight sexraid on aptly named Queenston Heights. His famous hard-on fading till K.R.A.Z. commemorated it forever, in pig-shit....
May the stench never fade, from delicate Crockville nostrils....
They knew. It was him....
He was laughing....
Johnny was laughing just hearing about it....
Some thanks he got....
Cops raided his shanty....
Kicked him shitless, for what he did to the Major...
Their Hero....
For dying with his hard on!!!
Disgusting pervert, they shouted. It wasn't funny....
K.R.A.Z. was appalled by this flagrant violation of his RIGHTS....
The kicking and stomping....
So humorless....
You had to be Comrade Stalin before anybody laughed at your jokes, only then they couldn't stop....

*****

Through the cheap stained torn plastic blind Johnny listened.... On the second-floor crapper... Noisily pinching his paltry pile... Imagining Mayor Smell Gasman's bulging clownface inches away from his straining asshole... Just enough for it to spread... Over his funny-face.... Into his goo-goo googely eyes.... Down his yackety trap... Up his bulbous clown nose.... Smudging the pancake makep all over his laughing cheeks....

Fuck! He was outta asswipes! Where was Handy when you needed him?

So he stole the mental-case housemate's. If he bitched, he'd say he was delusional.... Paranoid subtype....

Stoopid loony fucks! Get off the fire-escape!

*****

For days they'd smelled it. It hit everyone immediately upon entering. It intensified the air of parsimony and stagnation that would have impressed him anyway, thanks to what he saw, the cheap mat that bunched up under the door, the missing prisms in the dusty chandelier, the tin tray on the radiator to catch the mail when it slid through the mail slot under the soiled lace curtains....

It was worse, like what he'd inhale if he bent low over his stove and removed the lid from a pot of boiling over-cooked turnips. Worse, because he'd have anticipated the turnips. It was unexpected.

It was him....

He occupied the front room, up the (dark-varnished) stairs. Johnny often met him at the door of the shared bathroom. He took long showers, and often had a guest. His kitchen was across the hallway Johnny crossed, to and from his garret.

He sometimes met the guest too, a heavy-set native woman. He'd wait for her to come out of the bathroom. Early in the morning he'd hear her coughing and spitting blood into the toilet.

Guests were against the rules, but so was everything. He told Citizen Hearse that the woman had throat cancer. She visited him because she was lonely and afraid of dying. Then a few days later Roghozin's friend got very drunk in Roghozin's room and fell naked down the stairs. Citizen Hearse emerged from his office where he'd been counting the cigarettes again. He demanded what was going on. The woman stumbled upstairs, while Roghozin came downstairs.

He said, nothing. She fell, that's all.

Well cut it out, he said. Now I've lost count. I'll talk to you in the morning.

That was the last anyone saw of his friend. He began to see more of him, himself. He met him at the front door. He would just stand there drunk and trembling so hard he couldn't unlock the door.

Thing Street Asylum

Johnny walked around Thing Street...

He'd see him emerging from dives patronized mainly by small-time pushers and their clients.

So it wasn't totally unexpected.

It came to them simultaneously.

It was him.

When Johnny paid his rent in the second week of the stink, he asked Citizen Hearse if he thought it was....

Him!

He said, Call the cops!

The police arrived, opened his door with Citizen Hearse's (master) skeleton key, and put on gloves.

When Citizen Hearse identified the body he saw his TITZ CARD laid out on the table beside the phone, ready to call the hospital, but he died in his sleep.

Johnny imagined what it would have been like if he'd died right on the phone, clutching his chest, the receptionist asking if he was a danger to himself and others, stammering....

It was him....

*****

Dead Guy called Citizen Hearse. He couldn't pay his rent. He always fabricated some excuse. He'd pay half, the rest in instalments over 5 years, time off for Christmas.

Citizen Hearse called Porko, who told him. Dead Guys at Emile Durkheim pulled this stunt regularly. Christmas Eve, and other fetes. Like Thanksgiving, but not Thanksgiving. Shelter Standards tried to cap the Dead Guys they accommodated, but failed....

Sooner cap the Falls....

Dead Guy even played the lottery of the Ministry of Asylums and Casinoes. Every Thursday, Mayor Gasman's patented recycling bin was brim-full of Dead Guys' losing tickets. Porko got a sprain, wheeling them to the curb on Garbage Night.

Citizen Hearse belched, complacently. Dead Guys weren't known for winning.

Dead Guy'd get evicted, he'd gut his pad, renovate it, and stiff the Next One, for more money than it was worth.

*****

Citizen Hearse had to make an announcement....

He made himself hoarse telling the tenants one after another. In a frock coat and V. F. Weasel-Theatre's trade-mark black sombrero....

They took it very well. Alice came to the office with her laundry in a green garbage bag. She wanted some of the soap powder that Karl put in little Baggies as an excuse for being in the office early in the morning. Her laundry consisted of a pair of jeans. She would guard them in the laundry room all afternoon. No one in his right mind would steal them. Maybe that was why.

Citizen Hearse invited her to sit in one of the crummy chairs reserved for tenants. He was terrified he'd get bugs by sitting in a chair that a tenant had just vacated. Getting tenants to wash was out of the question. They were untouchables.

Alice apologized for not wearing nylons, for the announcement. It was terrible. Her feet were bare in dirty sneakers. That was on her mind. The announcement was an occasion. She hadn't been dressed for it.

She asked him how it had happened. He lied. Nobody knew. He was afraid the tenants wouldn't be able to take it.

Yet they lived such harsh lives. Alice was paranoid and lived in a state of imminent destruction. She was preoccupied with conspiracies. Frederick (not Fred) was always talking about his other bodies.

Deane was JFK, Jr.

Deane's lips moved in the airplane underwater.

He wasn't killed. He was murdered.

There were mummy babies under the bed.... Werewolves at the window....

*****

Gabriel was waiting outside the door. He was dead. He said you'd be dead too, if you were shot in the head.

He was sweating in a black raincoat over a nylon ski-jacket.

Sweat beaded his brow, dribbled down his chin, caught in his whiskers.

Johnny wanted him to remove at least one of his coats. At first he refused. Then he said all right. I'll strip. Bastard! He tugged at the buttons. He threw the raincoat at Johnny. Then he popped the metal buttons of the ski

jacket and threw that at him too. Johnny meekly folded them over his arm like a waiter. He carried them up the dark-varnished stairs to his room and hung them neatly in his closet. Like a a valet.

Gabriel followed him down the dark-varnished stairs. He stared blankly at the clock in the hallway, wondering when he should smoke his next cigarette. Johnny told him to go away, to sit in the parlor and watch TV. Gabriel told him to fuck off. Johnny said calm down to his broad back as it retreated down the hall into the lounge. He heard Gabriel damn him to hell, call him bastard atheist.

Gabriel read the Bible regularly; he was saved.

He was a lawyer, an I.T. Specialist.

*****

Porko talked to a couple of construction workers on Thing Street. About No. 9. It was nearly finished, after the cop car crashed into the apartment below. While it looked the same, the impact had structurally damaged the whole edifice. Like the House of Usher, or Frankenstein's Castle of Freaks. For weeks there'd been massive 4 by 4's jammed under the Edwardian attributes, rumored to be worth hundreds of dollars each. Everyone from PORC was after them.

One of the members overheard them. At least, Porko assumed he was. He wanted an apartment, right away. That one they were talking about.

Porko said, it wouldn't happen right away. First, he had to apply. That meant, fill out an application, and pay a deposit.

Could he see it?

Porko took him up the dark-varnished stairs on the Beastly side.

It offered a Thing Street panorama. Muffy and his girls loitered on the portico of the Lebanese church. Across the street, on the South East Corner, several dealers crossed the parking lot and entered the alley behind the chiropractor's, heading west. On the southeast corner, a cop car emerged from the alley behind the Family Restaurant, crossed Beastly, and entered the alley behind the chiropractor's, following the dealers....

He was an artist. He wanted to paint it. Put in a waterfall.

Porko suggested, Niagara Falls.

He came back a few minutes later, with the completed application and a money order for the first and last months' rent.

Porko sighed. He didn't get it.

At that, he flared. All right, he said. If you don't want me, just say so. He flounced off....

Johnny thought the waterfall was a bad sign.

*****

Johnny descended the dark-varnished stairs.

Through the whore-scratched glass he saw Federico Fellini squatting on a planter made of railroad ties, talking to his gang. There was a ragged old fir tree in the planter. It soughed on windy nights, lonely for all those forests painted by the Group of Seven-Eleven.

Then as he approached the landing a young man in jeans emerged from the area beside the mail-boxes.

Johnny normally ignored the things he saw waiting inside the door on Thing Street. He'd usually seen them before. They were other tenants, or their friends. They weren't friendly. This one looked up at him and smiled, like he wanted to talk to him.

You're waiting for someone?

Yes, you. The young man patted him on the back, very friendly. Johnny peered at him, wondering if he was from one of the shelters. Homeless things sometimes entered the building to keep warm. He'd find them huddled on the stairs. Sometimes he'd find pieces of bread, cigarette butts, broken pipes.

Johnny peered at him. Do I know you? He had short, dark hair. Brown eyes. He resembled any number of things he'd met in the shelter, but Johnny was sure he'd never met him.

The young man nodded.

Johnny wasn't sure if that meant yes, or he was just being friendly.

Are you waiting for someone?

Yes, you. The young man laughed.

I don't think I know you.

I was waiting for you to come down.

Johnny wondered if he meant he was waiting for anyone to come down.

I don't know you, Johnny repeated. Is there someone else? Johnny opened the door and called Federico Fellini. He asked him if the young man was with him.

Fellini said no, he wasn't. Johnny held the door open a little wider, for the young man to go.

You don't seem to be with anyone, Johnny said. So you ought to go.

Why? The young man looked totally confused.

Because you don't seem to have any business here.

No business?

Well, is there something you want to do?

Yes, I want to make a movie.

Johnny considered that he hadn't meant to ask him what he wanted to do with his life, what his dreams were, just what he wanted to do at Emile Durkheim House.

He wondered if the young man had seen one of the notices taped on telephone poles around the neighborhood and even taped to the Thing Street door, asking their cooperation for the film-shoot down the street. Various studios came to Thing Street whenever they needed to film in a low-down, low-life locale.

There were always a lot of colorful unemployed things hanging around, for extras. Maybe the young man was just acting, or already in a movie, or a schizophrenic from a group home, who'd wandered into the film-shoot and been unable to find his way out.

The film-shoot's down the street, Johnny said, holding the door wider....

What about Fellini.... Federico Fellini, the young man suddenly asked. Johnny figured he'd heard him ask Fellini if he knew him. But Fellini wasn't his real name. It was really King Vidor....

Whoever he was, he passed them, on the way to his floor. The young man tried to pass Johnny, to go with Fellini.

Can I go with you? The young man pleaded.

Fellini, let us say, turned and faced him. Not tonight, he said. As if it weren't equally impossible tomorrow night.

I want to rent a room, the young man finally explained. Is it 31? 32?

Johnny felt like telling him they weren't playing bingo. But he restrained himself. The young man was crazy.

Speak to the super in Number 1, Johnny said.

You mean Porko, the man said.

Yes, that's him. Johnny was surprised that the young man knew him. He wondered how long he'd been hanging around. The young man paused.

You have to go for now, Johnny explained.

Finally the young man walked out the door and down the steps. He stumbled, so Johnny warned him to be careful.

Wait, he said.

*****

Johnny was going to give him the address of a good shelter, when he got an idea. Wait, he repeated. Come upstairs. Let's TALK....

The young man's face lit up. He was going to make a movie....

Are you really, Dan Duryea....

Sure, Johnny said, leading him up the dark-varnished stairs. But first you have to do a screen test.

O, boyoboy. Then as he began to take in the thread-bare carpeting, the dark wainscoting, the sky-light with its spy-hole view of scudding clouds, and the generally desolate air of a depression era apartment-hotel frequented by ghosts of long-dead gangsters and their murdered molls, he got worried. When Johnny started to get ideas, he began to have second thoughts.

You – you really do want to make a movie, don't you?

Of course. A life-long dream. He noticed for the first time, not separately from his ideas, how charming he really was, now the table was turned, and Johnny had the advantage of surprise. A life-long dream...

You're not thinking of anything sexual, are you?

Why in the world would you ask that.

Because I'm straight!

I know, he said. Whoever said you weren't? To himself he thought yeah, sure. A moment ago you said you were waiting for me, just me.

He didn't want him to get the wrong idea, that's all.

He had the right idea all right. By then they were outside his room, on the 3rd floor of Emile Durkheim House. Johnny saw how he unconsciously stooped before entering.

Johnny helped him off with his knapsack, and removed his own shoes. The young man imitated him, as Johnny'd intended. That was only the start. The young man's feet smelled slightly funky, like damp salt.

There's the shower. Help yourself to a towel.

The young man looked puzzled.

To freshen up, Johnny explained. For your test.

He let him go into the bathroom, alone. Besides, the lock didn't work. Don't be afraid to blast it, Johnny said.

Got you, the young man said.

How butch, Johnny thought. When he heard the shower hissing he crept into the bathroom and stealthily removed the young man's clothing. He hastened with it into the basement laundry, deep in the bowels of Emile Durkheim House. He laughed, noticing how each of the machines was set for a different amount of change, depending on when it was installed. He chose a “middle-range” machine, installed in the late 70s, that still only cost $.75. Only at Emile Durkheim House!

When he got back the shower was still running, so Johnny slammed the door hard. The shower stopped with a shudder that went right through the plumbing. Even Dead Guy felt it.

The young man must have panicked when he didn't see his clothes, because he ran out, naked, into the kitchen, water beading the hair under his arms, around his nipples, in his crotch, down his legs.

There, there, Johnny said, holding him tight. I took your dirty clothes to the laundry, that's all. Look, you're all wet.

Johnny really did look, holding his body away from him. Even retracted with fear, his dick was enormous as a horse's, a stallion's to be precise.

He made him sit on the bed while he rubbed him dry. His fingers felt his nipples through the cheap material. They were almost as large as a woman's. They got hard.

He reminded him of one of his students in his other life. So far as he was concerned, that's who he was. He was Lance!

Lance Dishlexy had come back to him.

He started to rub his back without the towel. He slowly worked his hand around his shoulders, finally resting the fingers of his right hand on Lance's erect right nipple.

That tickles, he said. Cold!

Tell me about yourself.

Jeepers, Johnny....

They had so much catching up to do!

*****

Lance arrived at Oakridge at 6:30 the next day. That was when Johnny told him to go, when supper was over and there was no more work to do, till snack at 10 o'clock. Staff were in a good mood, almost generous.

Rusty was doing intakes at the desk to the left in the former ticket booth. He had the pink intake form in front of him. He was slowly filling it in with the answers he got from the strapping youth seated in front of him on a little plastic chair. Rusty was taking his time.

Dishlexy, Rusty repeated. Isn't that a Polish name?

My folks are from Warsaw, Lance explained. He stretched. He was wearing the beautiful vintage runners that Johnny'd bought him at the Zombie Crypt. Johnny came into the office right now, carrying Lance's bedding. There was only a blanket. They were out of everything else. Shelter Standards should hear of this. They would, if Johnny had anything to do with it.

He winked at him, while Rusty slowly completed the form.

Rusty had trouble writing, as well as spelling. He knew Johnny had a Ph.D. Once he had to order toilet paper, or send Johnny down the street with a shopping cart. It took him all day. He asked him how he spelled toilet. Johnny said T O Y L E T. Rusty believed him. He was dyslexic. Probably retarded.

They were made for each other, thought Johnny, the little match-maker.

We eloped after the Revolution, Lance resumed. All we had was a little Kielbasa, and an autographed photograph of Frederick Chopin.

What else does one need, Johnny thought. There's your bedding, Johnny said. If you ever get through with that intake, I'll take him into the dorm.

The – the – men's dorm? Lance queried, right on cue.

That's right, Rusty said. It's right down there, past the washrooms.

N-no p-p-private rooms?

Rusty removed his gaze from his right running shoe and looked him in the eye. First time away from home, Lance? He had such beautiful brown eyes.

He pretended to be burning up with fever. He rubbed his chest, raising his tight T-shirt over his flat stomach, exposing the wick of hair. My folks wanted me to be a concert pianist. I-I've lived a very sheltered life. And....

Rusty paused, his ballpoint pen suspended in mid-air. Say it!

I'm not even a man! He rent his T-shirt like a second skin he wanted to shed, exposing his beautiful breasts. The large, sensitive, almost female paps stiffened against the sudden blast of cold air.

Rusty checked him out. He was confused. The blood rushed into the tumescence between his thighs, rapidly becoming almost as tall as himself. It starved his brain, making thought impossible. Lance's white runners turned him on, ditto the short-hair cut and – his tits! He looked like a man to him. Meanwhile, stripped to the waste, broken, Lance was sobbing in front of him.

Rusty put down his clipboard and came over, just as Ann Savage emerged from the kitchen. She took in the scene at a glance. Not wanting to be be left out, she ran over and held Lance's left shoulder while Rusty swooned on his right, like he was having a seizure. Together they gently lowered him to the floor, placing one of the blankets under his head.

Miss Savage asked if it was a suicide attempt.

No, Rusty said. Identify issue. See if there's space.

N-n-not the men's dorm, Lance whimpered.

Women's dorm? Miss Savage flattered herself she didn't need a lot of direction.

That's the place.

N-not the dorm, Lance repeated.

It's O.K. He explained how he could self-identify. The con worked like this. Don't sit there whimpering, throwing fits and tearing your only good T-shirt. Stand up like a man and say “I'm a WOMAN.”

W-w-wo-man, Lance repeated.

Miss Savage came back momentarily with the good news. There was a space.

Beside Carlotta.....

*****

Carlotta was uncomfortable sleeping beside Lance. He was slow to rid himself of stubborn male ways. She knew old habits died hard. She hated the sight of his old boxers, so she bought him lovely lace panties. He forgot to wear them. He lay there moaning with a great hard-on. She'd been very patient. Finally she told staff.

Lance was sleeping with a hard-on again.

So? Miss Savage demanded. What can we do about it? He says he's a woman.

Can't he at least cover?

I'll take care of it, said Rusty.

All the women except Miss Savage and Carlotta were out turning tricks. They accompanied Rusty to the dorm. Miss Savage pounded on the door. Man on, she said, applying the age-old expression loosely.

One of us should go with you, Miss Savage said.

It's all right. I'm a fag.

They watched from the door. He hadn't taken non-violent crisis intervention for nothing. Very gently he helped Lance get rid of his hard-on.

Carlotta wondered if they were going to have to go through that every time Lance got hard. Why couldn't he just go out with the other sex workers? She immediately regretted that question. Johns got really passionate when they discovered Jane had a dick.

*****

Rusty Brighteyes was the fag of Oakridge. He was short, but unnaturally broad. He exercised at a gym downtown. He wore a polo shirt, slightly too small. It accentuated his nipples. The tuft of long blond hair that grew between his breasts was barely visible through the open neck. He was enormously proud of his breasts. He was afraid he'd get AIDS, and lose one....

He was proud of his face, which he thought resembled Colombo's, in the reruns. He'd sit beside Johnny on one of those metal benches in the TV room. He'd ask him if he reminded him of someone famous. He'd wait, till Johnny said Colombo.

He'd cruise, telling Johnny that he had a beautiful complexion. Where did he get such skin, he'd demand, staring boldly into his face.

He also had a thing for feet, especially Johnny's in hot runners. Rusty and Johnny used to plug in the VCR for the boys in the TV room. They were so stoned, they'd reverse the cables. Rusty would kneel before the TV stand, like a dog. Johnny would stand over him. Rusty would pretend to lose his balance and steady himself by pressing his shoes, osculating his foot through the canvas runner.

Johnny regretted not wearing sandals. Rusty would have committed fellatio.

He regaled his coworkers with tales of unprotected gay sex in the locker room after a late night workout when the other fags went home for their beauty rest. After weeks of stalking he finally took this twenty year-old athlete up the ass.

He was easy to get. Johnny used to sell him cheap cigarettes from Thing Street because he was always broke. He spent his money on pretty boys. They worked in the glittering towers around Yucca Flats. He had trouble keeping up with them. They stood him up, they never called. He got depressed.

Miss Savage was impressed. She thought he was wonderfully self-destructive, sophisticated like Truman Capote and Andy Warhol, terribly confused.

Pioneers of Alienation

He wore plastic sandals, even in winter. He'd slip and get a sprain, or he'd pull a tendon in the gym. He'd say it was a workplace injury, that he he got stopping fist-fights between homeless things in the TV room. He had more sick days than work days. He'd be off so long even the Union asked him if he liked his job.

Miss Savage went over to his place. It was a love nest with a fridge, a stove, a sink, a toilet, and a double bed. He was behind in the rent. His feet really were sore. He'd been stalking an especially beautiful twenty year old at the gym and he'd overdone it.

She explained that she was doing a short turn. If she went home to the burbs, she'd spend all her time commuting and not have any time to sleep. Could she sleep over?

Miss Savage wanted to share his bed. He wasn't bad looking. Looked a little like Colombo. So what, if he thought he was a fag? He hadn't met the right woman.

Rusty watched a lot of 50s sci-fi.

The scientists' short hair-cuts turned him on. They chain-smoked, in rolled-up shirt-sleeves, behind banks of radios that looked to Rusty exactly like microwave ovens.

The movies seemed to have been made for the moment when the spacemen stripped to the waist. There were virtually no spacewomen. There must have been a few in the audience, and (more than) a few queers.

Colonel Brighteyes' spaceship was intercepted by aliens. They penetrated his spacesuit. He crashed! When they opened the capsule, he was dead. They carried his corpse into the Kwanzaa hut. Naturally the first thing they removed was his shirt. Too bad he was just beginning to grow bitch tits when he died.

What was it like in the 50s? How did the casting director intimate that he wanted real men with nice chests, who looked good with their shirts off, and who didn't mind going topless, without making them think he was a fag? Maybe he attributed his criteria to his wife. She was a Gidget type, with great taste in men. She knew what women, and fags wanted.

Maybe they were all fags. He would have told John Agar to shut up, and show him his tits. He wanted to see how he'd look on the slab, in a catatonic state after being contaminated by the blood beast, colleagues muttering pseudo-scientific crap about his tissues refusing to dissipate.

In some movies they worried about leaving home for some distant planet, about losing home to aliens, about aliens making homes for themselves in bodies kept alive to sustain a generation of vipers.

They worried about being punished with homelessness, for Luddite nonconformity with a technocratic society....

*****

Rusty experienced a plutonium explosion under simulated combat conditions. He was trying to save a Pomeranian that had strayed into the Atomic Detonation Area.

He ran like a girl, not fast enough....

Brought him out yet? They didn't hold much hope. They meant for the dog.

Rusty was quite a mess when they got to him. The reporters had seen plenty but they hadn't seen anything like Rusty Brighteyes before.

Please, I'm his fiance. Was he conscious when you reached him? We were to be married tonight. In Vegas. We met in the funniest way. Our cars locked bumpers at an intersection in Chicago.

Will he be all right, Doctor?

Your name was the only word he spoke. So who's the genius decided to give you a man's name?

A man's name? She covers her face with her hands and sobs uncontrollably.

The doctor turns his back on her. Stupid hyterical woman.

Cortisone continuously, nurse.

Yes, doctor. Plasma too?

Yeah, yeah. Don't expert me.

She peaks under the covers and screams.

How was it possible? His skin! It's not burnt! He's developed new skin!

Took two bazooka charges and a drop of over seven hundred feet, but he kept right on growing at the rate of eight to ten feet a day. That bad (?) dose of radiation poisoning sure paid off.

*****

He'd worked most of his shifts at Yucca Flats They were night shifts, 11:45 P.M. till 8:00 A.M. That was fine with him, because they tended to be quiet. There was bed check shortly after curfew at 12:30 A.M., some cleaning in the T.V. room, a few late meals and snacks to distribute, rounds, and that was (usually) all. Their occupancy had been hovering around 70 lately (capacity), so there usually weren't many intakes. At 5:30 one of the coffee urns went on, at 6:30 it went out to the residents in the T.V. room (already impatiently waiting), and the second urn was plugged in.

For the more experienced workers, especially for the supervisor, there was always a lot of paper work, calculating the money the City had to pay Citizen Hearse for each occupant, the Personal Needs Allowance, etc. This was very 19th-century, Victorian, mechanical, a great pain in the ass. Many aspects of it remained opaque to him, because of his intense aversion to it, but also because it was part of an irrational system based on custom. He wasn't able to get a clear answer from anybody, how to distinguish, on the pink forms they filled out for billing purposes, a resident from an alien....

Did they mean resident of this City, or another? Did they mean resident of the City, the province, or the country? This province, or some satrapy? Perhaps he took it all too literally. He certainly took it too seriously, since everyone filled out the pink form, the Pink as they called it, his or her own way. Pepe Le Moku was straight from the Rez, if that's what it said. Idiosyncrasy was part of the Victorian charm of the place. In reality they were all aliens, since they only lived in shelters, which wasn't exactly living. It was asylum....

He didn't care. After all, he wasn't even the housekeeper.

He was the keeper....

*****

Rusty asked what his occupation was.

He said dancer.

> My dancing lady
> There's nobody like you....

His employer's address?

The Variety, downtown.

Legs?

Pardon me?

Miss Savage explained that Rusty wanted to take a look at his legs.

> When I look at you in admiration
> Wondering where I got the luck....

He wondered where Shelter Standards said anything about having to show your legs. Maybe, if he didn't, they'd charge him with non-compliance.

Well, all right, he said. He removed his runners and stood for a moment in his socks, undoing his belt. His feet left wet sweat-prints all over the cold linoleum, as he removed first one leg, then the other. Then he kicked his jeans into the corner, just like a professional strip-tease artist.

> After a while dear
> These two happy feet
> Will beat down the aisle dear....

You dance beautifully, but I'm afraid classical ballet ain't what we're looking fer. More like Maw Rainey's Black Bottom.

You guys gonna gimme a bed or aren't you?

Miss Savage, see if you can find a mat.

He paused pulling on his pants. I gotta sleep on a mat? What am I? An animal?

Yeah, so?

I was solo dancer at the Apollo Variety. I don't wanna sleep on no mat with bugs.

So, why'd you quit.

The boss really went for me. I was his number one boy. His wife thought otherwise.

Look, you must be new to the shelter system. Otherwise, you'd know. Every shelter's infested. Even the hotels. He pointed through the window at the luxury hotels towering between the big banks. Guests bring their own insecticide. Look at Johnny there.

Johnny came over. He was a nice, obedient relief boy.

The guest glared at Johnny.

Look closely. See that thing moving on his collar.

Sure enough, there was vermin crawling up the collar of Johnny's denim jacket. He'd just put some dirty bedding in the washer.

Ugh, said Nigel.

Thanks, Johnny. You may resume your duties. You see, he returned to Nigel. Johnny brings insects home with him. Now he says his whole building's infested. Right, Johnny?

Yup, he said, removing a hamper of filthy towels. Emile Durkheim's buggy!

It was, too. Only he wasn't sure it wasn't the other way around. He wasn't sure that, instead of infesting Emile Durkheim with Oakridge bugs, it wasn't vice versa.

So if you keep putting on airs like this, you can sleep on the street.

Landing someone quite so grand
When so many folks get stuck....

Oh, please mister. Nigel suddenly lost control. I don't wanna go back on the street.

All right, get a grip. You can stay, as long as you don't have many affairs. Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre don't tolerate no fooling around!

I've had all the boys I can take.

Rusty doubted that very much.

My dancing lady, to you....

*****

Advertising Zoncolite's Milquestoast Radio Hour dramatization of the off-Broadway hit-version of Never Had It So Good: 666 Angels Revue.

Plastering sexy mug-shots of dykey-looking puerperal maniacs, moral imbeciles, and paranoid schizophrenics on every pigeon-shat Thing Street phone pole.

Thorazine-shuffling in flood-pants. With glue-pots, brushes, flyers.

Tearing down advertisements for Johnny's book. Mad Pride Toronto's Waltzing Swaztika SS Band....

Johnny was shocked and appalled. They were always the FIRST to whine about how evil fuck C(old) K(iller) Sharke stole their love-letters to U.S. marriage bureaus and read them to drunken beer buddies at Thing Street stag parties....

They raved in the middle of their psychotic episodes.

Those letters were friggin Shakespearean! Sonnets! The docs stole 'em!!!

Too often they were nothing but a tedious litany of self-pollution and dementia. Regardles of gender, the authors were Jesus Christ or Mary Magdalene....

A harmless fantasy till they made their kids drink piss at Holy Communion....

*****

I graduated from Montage U in 1991. My thesis adviser was Dildo Wingnut, a lazy bugger and all round mother-fuck.

He wouldn't get me a good job in Montreal, so I fled to Lethe Bridge, state capital of the Aryan Nation.

What a surprise!

From the only high-rise overlooking the coolie I had a beautiful view. Swastikas and crosses burned all night in blighted wheat fields. I was amazed by the zeal with which the cops broke down my door, searching for drugs when all I had was Vitamin C....

They had race riots during registration. The whites objected to the presence of so many yellows, who responded by removing their belts and vigorously swinging the buckles, menacing scores of blond brush-cuts, and blue eyes. It was inspiring to see what spirit of prudence immediately prevailed upon the whole line. They shut the fuck up.

The Aryans were intense. In that enormous prairie wasteland they really got their wind up. The economy was always boom or bust, with lots of shady speculation. At any moment your place could be sold right out from under your feet. The students were diarists, occupational wanderers and secret masturbators, with a propensity for bipolar disorder.

But they were the hardest workers I ever had, such was their driving ambition to get laid.

Every day I wondered which colleague would be outed as a homosexual, ostracized as a lecher, caught in a love-triangle, or arrested in a beer parlor, till one morning the chairman of the department, Dunton Depot, told me that I had been.

Imagine my utter astonishment at winning the SWEEPSTAKES!

A free all-expenses-paid invitation-only aids test down at the precinct. A finger-printing DNA sampling party. A huge satellite-transmitted media scrum. My street address and home phone number published all over the internet. It was too much to attribute entirely to myself.

I could not be sure, but I thought my sexuality had something to do with it.

Thing Street Asylum

For years I had enjoyed a passionate friendship with an idea. Lots of visiting, conversation, letter writing, eating, sleeping together, cohabitating, heavy petting, and foot-fucking.

I know you are even better looking.

A lanky, dark-haired, dark-eyed, 6'3" westerner with features that only improve with age, and a Gothic propensity for feet. You tower above me. Your leg-hairs scratch like the bark of strong conifers. Your athlete's foot blooms like mushrooms in the shady moist crevasses of your massive and powerful root....

*****

Just got in the door from roller-blading class. Phew! What a workout!

This is really not meant to be an excuse, but things are getting mighty busy here right now, so the notes may be short & infrequent! I'm flying in with the boys tomorrow night, and I'm helping Bruce move in on Monday....

He finally got a job. With an internet dating company, after he left that glow-ball used clothing franchise.

Must be crazier about the boy than I thought....

Can't say why I love flying so much, but Bruce sure looks a lot like a Men's Health poster boy.

Ground school's chock-full of all these sexy stallions with short hair-cuts and military fatigues and thick green army-socks taking flying lessons from Colonel Blimp. None of us has ever even been in a glider....

I began in the '80s, but didn't finish for mental reasons. In fact Bruce and the fly-boys and I all came down with some sort of brain virus....

All we could do was type, and look at pictures....

Our memory kept crashing, so we couldn't even get off the ground....

I started to get my wings again in the 90s.... Apart from doing volunteer search & rescue work, I fly for sexaual gratification. I've flown down to Florida, but mostly do short trips. I fly once a month with Bruce and the fly-boys in convoy, to symposia all over the Republic....

I'm always looking for more tricks to perform with my Cessna....

Your neighborhood sounds really swell, Johnny. Trees and old houses and big friendly tabbies!

A picture of me, looking like a tree?

Not sure how I should take that, Johnny Boy!

*****

Here's one of a typical Thing Street property, just around the corner from MY HOUSE. Most of the houses in the neighborhood were constructed before the turn of the 19th century, for middle-class speculators, criminals who worked in the banking district, within easy commuting distance by street car.

The street cars are still running and some of their big houses have been gentrified, but most have been converted into cheesy apartments and rooming houses, for mental patients and bums like me.

The speculators are still running too....

Thing Street is one of the most mixed neighborhoods in the country, with every ethnic minority, gays (that's us), bohemians, psychiatric survivors, students, etc.

It's all so terribly confusing.

In the dead of winter you can sleep on the sidewalk in your underwear and no one will disturb you, or care....

*****

Porko asked Johnny if he'd noticed the tree.

Johnny asked which one? Why? He wasn't generally aware of the trees on Thing Street, although he realized there probably were some.

Trees weren't what Thing Street was famous for: crack-whores, pimps, rock-stars, consumer/survivors of the Ministry of Asylums and Casinos, etc.

They were why he'd had to prune the tree in the first place, since they transacted business in its shade, and hid behind its branches when the cops cruised by.

They were indignant at the mutilation of their shelter, for every numbered branch of which Porko was now liable for a considerable penalty from the Commissar of Shrubs and Camouflage for Enterprising Youth.

They left messages on that dignitary's voice-mail, informing him anonymously countless times of this latest outrage by Citizen Hearse, his agent, and a carefully hand-chosen crew of mercenary goons.

The latter met Porko at THE DROP INN, where he paid them off in cigarettes.

Pioneers of Alienation

*****

He met Bruce on Thing Street, outside THE DROP INN. They walked home. It wasn't far. Emile Durkheim was right next door.

Bruce hadn't worked since the internet dating company. He looked like the protagonist of a horror movie. Hangover Square or The Lodger, something like that.

He wanted to ask Johnny a question. He wanted to know if he'd met The New Guy. He described him.

He looked like someone in a horror movie. Wasted by BRAIN VIRUS!

Could have been anybody on Thing Street, but Johnny knew. Krakpotkin!

He'd been talking. He said he was going to get Johnny evicted, for locking him in the airing court. Johnny figured it was a garbled version of their argument over the gate, or maybe he'd locked him in one afternoon without even realizing it. He was always shutting doors.

Johnny tried to tell Krakpotkin. The gate had to be locked. The alley teamed with crack-whores. They got into the yard, climbed the fire-escapes, and entered apartments that were under renovation. They dumped in toilets that weren't connected to the plumbing, broke the water tanks having sex, and spilled the contents on the floor. They doused the hall lights and damaged every door on the landing, looking for one that wasn't locked. They stole Elmo's camera, right in front of him. They said they knew his girlfriend.

Johnny was always locking the back-yard door, but he was barely aware of Krakpotkin's existence. He hadn't talked to him at all, since their altercation.

Krakpotkin rarely talked to anyone except other junkies. He denied he was one himself. It was customary for Hearse-Ferrari's goons to stand around debating who among them were junkies. Naturally, they exempted present company. Really, they ALL were.

Although Krakpotkin gravitated toward junkies, he hated them. The people he talked to invariably confessed. They hated them.

Nobody had any insight. It was the one foolproof sign they were ALL junkies for something.... For THINGS!

To cope with the chronic pain of being NOTHING, of wanting like Hearse Ferrari's gangster intimates, to be something indeed to be a THING, shining in the window of Johnny's THING STORE till some NOTHING ran off with them down THING STREET, Krakpotkin made a pig of himself, and SELF-MEDICATED.

Being STONED! The next best THING to being a THING in Johnny's THING STORE....

Krakpotkin could tell the days of the week by the condition of his DOSETTE. If the meds were late, and the bubble-pack was empty, it was the weekend.

He became confused when Porko got his meds from FINA PHARM, whose strapping stud delivery boy was never late, despite being the toast of all the dirty old men in Best Lodge. Krakpotkin wouldn't believe it was Friday till Johnny showed him the date on the screensaver of his smart phone.

His favorite was Butch, now the worst junkie dealer on Thing Street. That was why he told him. He was getting Johnny evicted, for locking the back yard door on him.

Not that anyone on Thing Street needed any reason to snitchnbitch. Scuttlebutt was like AIDS. Johnny wondered who the first rat was.

Thorazinio!

Bruce wanted to know if he'd heard anything else. Johnny said no, not till now. He thanked him. For the heads-up.

Be patient!

*****

Given his perfect indifference about the gate, it was strange how much he hated the very IDEA of INTRUDERS.

It was the canned goods he'd piled all over, in case of famine. The piles of change, the neatly folded dollar bills....

In the EARLY DAYS, the HONEYMOON PERIOD Krakpotkin always had money, but he still frequented THE DROP INN for FREE LUNCH from the PROMISED LAND, and canned goods.

He had meal tickets for A HUNDRED YEARS....

Krakpotkin never frequented the loco food-bank, however. Porters would arrive every noon-hour with Tupperware containers bearing the trademark of the Sands or a loco Handy Haven, and climb the dark-varnished stairs to Krakpotkin's. They would descend immediately, with the same Tupperware containers unopened. Krakpotkin would fire them, for weeks at a time....

Then Krakpotkin himself would climb the dark-varnished stairs every noon-hour, with boxes of Elephant (c) popcorn and corndogs from the Koreans. He bought everything loco, from the varieties. They were expensive, but he had money then. No one knew where he got it, but Johnny sometimes saw him with people who resembled workers, with official-looking manila folders and, occasionally, a dosette.

Once Johnny even saw him with Citizen Hearse. Strange, because these days The Chief was rarely WITHOUT A CLIENT....

Krakpotkin piled junk outside his door, in Cabalistic patterns. If anyone removed it to enter, it was impossible to replace it exactly the same way. Krakpotkin would know, he'd had an INTRUDER....

*****

Johnny was at the Beastly door. He'd found the red-handled key and was about to insert it into the lock, when a large bearded face loomed over him. The man opened the door from the inside and went out. Then another and another came out of the small door beside the mail boxes. Each larger, broader, taller and more stoned than the last.

Johnny hadn't thought there was enough room in all Emile Durkheim to accommodate such big goons, or enough dope.

Finally Federico Fellini emerged, in jodhpurs. The DIRECTOR! The most stoned of all.

*****

Porko asked if he'd heard about the BUST.

Johnny wondered, which one.

Three big guys. Some of Federico Fellini's friends. Maybe he'd seen them around?

Ah!

He said one of them robbed the Sunny Mart Convenience last week. The cops went to Mahmoud Fukabuk and told him. Someone had to pay for it, to calm the public.

It didn't take Mahmoud long to decide whom he could most spare. He'd give them not one but three scapegoats. He'd been longing to get rid of them for years.

The cops asked him where they could find them.

Mahmoud not only gave them the address, he told them when they would find them in, with a fresh load of crack.

Porko explained that Mahmoud was behind the mysterious murders on Thing Street, the ones that scandalized the City and reinforced its rotten name. The bodies were buried in vacant lots beside housing projects. Mahmoud's style!

Johnny guessed he wouldn't be meeting Fellini's friends at the Beastly door any more.

*****

Hearse-Ferrari should know. Something happened last night.

At 2300 he heard banging on Butch's door. He thought crack whores were breaking in. He went to his own door and looked through the key-hole.

He saw Butch's door at the end of the long corridor, and a big fat black woman. She wanted IN! She was NAKED!

She carried her clothes over her arm, and a wad of institutional triple-ply ass-wipes in one hand. With the other, she struck the door.

Butch jabbered and scolded, within.

Johnny assumed the woman was a date gone wrong, whom he'd jettisoned undressed.

He felt sorry, for Mitzi.

For Butch, angry.

He entered the corridor, intending to ask the lady to be quiet. Approaching Butch's, he distinctly heard him ask, who the fuck are you?

He protested, he'd never seen her before in his life. Before what, Johnny wondered. Before FUCKING her, just now?!

Beat it, Butch screamed, over and over. What Johnny meant.

The woman asked if he was Federico Fellini.

Hearing Johnny, Butch felt sufficiently emboldened to open up. He looked stoned, as he usually was when he retired. He'd obviously not been on a date. He waved Johnny in.

Meanwhile, the black woman buttoned her jeans and donned an Iron Maiden T-shirt. She turned to leave by the fire-escape, as if she'd come up that way, through the back yard with its alley so familiar to Trixie Zane and other

$CAMH types. He asked her not to leave that way, and walked her off the property onto Thing Street looking for Fellini or one of his gang, one of her Other Brothers....

The police came upstairs a minute later, responding to a call from yet another loser in the Twin Towers, about whom they retained their customary silence. Johnny noticed, however, that the younger officer winced when he told them.

The woman who'd attempted to pummel her way into Butch's apartment, was BLACK!

Obviously the call to which they'd responded concerned a BLACK BITCH!

The older officer grumbled the fire-escape was wide open, so they couldn't do any neighborhood policing till Hearse-Ferrari fixed it....

*****

Someone's meds spilled onto the floor of the Thing Street car.

Hey Joe, you better pick up your meds.

That reminded Johnny of all the spilled meds in his life. His own and other things' meds. There were the tablets he put in his pocket with his change in the morning and took out worn down into pieces at night. He usually just threw them away....

The meds he spilled onto the floor of the psychome when he was dispensing them from clients' dosettes and never found among the dust and paper-clips where he searched for them on hands and knees....

The meds the quest of a substitute for which sent Federico Fellini to the small-time pushers down Thing Street in the Octopus Restaurant....

On election night he passed the scrutineers visible through the Thing Street windows of the loco drop-in. They were all National Socialists. They were still losing. The scrutinizer in the orange jumpsuit behind the heavy table attended Porko's drop-in....

*****

From the Lansdowne bus-stop Johnny viewed a wretched little mall of cheap stores and low dives huddled around a parking lot full of wrecks.

The cars were junk too.

A dozen survivors nursed draft beer and stale coffee in Asylum Donuts. It was the only licensed donut shop in Hogtown, perhaps because it was mistaken by the Inspector for the Parkdale Bistro next door. It was separated from it by a sidewalk and a door in a plate-glass window. The same clientèle patronized both resorts.

Survivors!

Johnny recognized the decayed boyfriend of the native lady who'd sold contraband cigarettes to the group home where he'd worked. She'd wait in the van, on Thing Street. Johnny would bring her wads of money, while the boyfriend delivered cartons of cigarettes in green garbage bags. His name was Harvey, like the giant rabbit in the movie. He was a large, taciturn man in late middle-age. He wore jeans, jean jacket, and baseball cap. He had a shifty, furtive demeanor. When Johnny passed Asylum Donuts, he'd look for Harvey at one of the little linoleum-topped tables in the plate-glass window, everything an effect of white and yellow.

Harvey never played the one-armed bandit on his right, or spoke much to the two-armed ones on his left. He followed Johnny with his eyes as far as he could without moving his skull. Johnny wondered if Harvey was afraid he'd tell. It was more likely he thought Johnny would undersell him. Harvey must have known that Johnny bought his cigarettes on the corner, from Mahmoud, the Persian, for half of what he charged. Even selling in bulk to the group home, he charged the full price. He gouged. He took advantage of the mentally ill.

At Asylum Donuts business was booming.

The preference of those whose lives were disordered by schizophrenia for the stronger, cheaper varieties of cigarettes has already been remarked by the editors of the DSMIV, those austere fucks.

The native woman wasn't around anymore. Harvey must have decided to go into business on his own. Occupying the same seat daily, in plain view of Thing Street, was no doubt his idea. It was advertising. He'd either weighed the extra sales against the higher odds of getting arrested and determined that he'd still make a profit, or (more likely) he'd noticed the extra sales and been so dazzled by them he forgot all about the danger.

Johnny hoped they busted the crook, for exploiting insanity.

*****

Johnny tried to get Warfarin Boy a volunteer postion with the loco Bluecoats. Johnny spoke to the manager. He said Warfarin Boy could apply to volunteer. Nobody'd ever been rejected, so he'd (probably) get in. However many

didn't work out, so if Wafarin thought he was going to get a free ride with a lot of benefits right away, he was deluded. He'd have to do some WORK. For now all that was required of him was one four-hour shift a week. Later he'd write Warfarin Boy a letter to show his so-called worker how far he was progressing - so he could get a TTC pass.

The next time Johnny saw Warfarin Boy he beckoned to him. Warfarin Boy was relaxing on the sidewalk outside Asylum Donuts, with dirty old men. His dealers either had the same barber, or their barbers had the same bad taste for ugly 70s haircuts.

The Bluecoats were behind the parking lot, in a crummy mall with a rundown laundry full of old Maytags, a bar called Breakfast Something-or-Other that sold beer to poor alky schizos from $CAMH Archway upstairs, and a junky used computer store with boxes full of IBM Thinkpad parts that the Muslim proprietor refused to sell because he was always praying on the telephone and he wanted them for something he wouldn't say.

$CAMH Archway wasn't even a storefront clinic. It was over the worst DONUT SHOP in Porkdale. Donut Girl wouldn't work there. Just the place, for Warfarin Boy, but he wouldn't come.

Johnny said there was a job for him at the Bluecoats. All he had to do was follow him in.

Warfarin Boy said he just wanted to buy dope and get high. He said so with a choking sob, like it made him angry. The world had reduced him to this. Life....

The muff-faced bum squatting beside him simpered in(s)anely. It dawned on Johnny. Warfarin's dealer! The hardware store thought he must have had a terrific hard-on for white squirrels. The women fought for the privilege of servicing him....

Warfarin could get high any time on Thing Street, but it wasn't every day he could apply to be a Bluecoat Volunteer. Warfarin also owed Johnny money, so he played along. He accompanied Johnny to the Bluecoats. Johnny left him with the manager.

After the interview the manager said Warfarin seemed like a nice young man, but he was not all there. He'd told the manager he was a people person. The manager paused. He obviously thought Warfarin was mad. He therefore scheduled his first shift that Wednesday.

Wednesday came, but not Warfarin. Johnny talked to the manager again. Warfarin never even called!

*****

Johnny met his neighbor going out. They talked for half an hour, in the Thing Street vestibule. Johnny was conscious of the new camera Citizen Hearse had installed. Like a showerhead. They were making a movie.

Elmo said he was still watching the movies Johnny hung in a garbage bag on his door-nob.

They were westerns. He remembered The Man from the Alamoe, starring Glen Ford. He told him the story. The Texans knew they'd probably all be killed by Santa Anna, so they chose Glen Ford to be the survivor, and look after their wives and children. He was brave, looking after all those women, but he was branded a coward, for being a survivor....

Johnny was thinking it took courage to be a psychiatric survivor in the wild, wild west....

Elmo interrupted his reverie, asking him to help him remember the other movies....

Johnny couldn't! So he asked him if he was going to Asylum Donuts.

He complained. The Spider was always waiting there.

Porko'd told him. How it felt when you realized you knew everyone Elmo talked about. It wasn't a good feeling, but as prospects diminished, and they retreated from the life they'd had, and it from them, Thing Street wasn't just a street anymore, it was the whole world.

Johnny was used to seeing The Spider. In the patio in the parking lot. Where he could see who was coming, from far away. Stocky, with short hair and a mustache. He victimized the weak, and was victimized by the strong. The bully!

Elmo usually only talked to Johnny after he got so upset by the infamous Spider and the other regulars at Asylum Donuts, he couldn't contain himself. He could have had his coffee at any donut shop in Porkdale. Even a different one on Thing Street would have made a huge improvement, but Asylum Donuts was just a few doors away. His world had dwindled to a few blocks. He insisted on going there, till the New Place opened across the street.

At Asylum Donuts The Spider would sit down beside him and accuse him of calling him all kinds of bad things: a junkie, an extortionist, a parasite, an insect. Without intimating that he agreed, Elmo would explain, it was the snitch who'd called him names. Fearing she'd been overheard (it was a neighborhood of snitches), Trixie endeavoured to turn the tables, by blaming Elmo.

Elmo digressed to tell him about Trixie. Johnny'd already heard. She was one of the ones he recognized, even before he heard her name. A loco legend.

She taped knives to her arms. She loitered outside Asylum Donuts with a big, mean dog. It wouldn't let anyone get too close.

Even the dog had a history. It had belonged to another regular at Asylum Donuts. A stalker who sicked the dog on Elmo, so he complained to the police. They made him give the dog away, or destroy it. He gave it to Trixie.

Pioneers of Alienation

Trixie'd been a crack whore. Right after her Sex Show at the CNE got shut down, and before the new fence behind Emil Durkheim House prevented her, she'd stroll up the alley into the airing court under the fire escapes and suck cock.

He figured whenever the stalker got nostalgic for the dog, he hung out at Asylum Donuts, picking fights with the regulars, so Trixie would sick the dog on him and he'd get it back. Schizoid reasoning, with its peculiar, internal logic.

It was all beginning to make sense....

Who'd have believed it?

So yesterday he decided to have a coffee with Martin the Muff in the new National Socialist café across the street. Everything was organic, and more expensive. It was worth it, to get away from The Spider. If he could....

It was an initiative of the National Socialist Party of Dadania, for Homeless Youth, and Occupational Wanderers. Formerly, it had been a perfectly functional furniture store. The van used to park on the sidewalk while the proprietor dealt to the youth, waiting for the Lansdowne bus. The Socialists bought the building, for the hardwood floor and tin ceiling. Lately, within the last six months, they'd installed book shelves, potted plants and, finally, a cash register.

He was enjoying the difference, when The Spider began to make rude gestures, sunning himself in the folding chair in the patio across Thing Street. Elmo knew they were for him, and for Martin for being with him. He couldn't escape! It was as if they were connected, by invisible wires. The Spider pulled the strings, to let him know. That's why they called him The Spider....

The Spider crept across the street and started making faces in the window, and screaming. Elmo got up to speak to management, with that high-pitched voice of his. Help, help, like a fly!

The Fly! That was the movie!!!

*****

At 10:00 Saturday night Johnny heard noise in the hall outside his unit. He tried to look out the spy-hole, but the corridor was TOTALLY DARK!

For the first time in residence, all the lights had been extinguished. During blackouts, at least the EXIT signs glowed dimly, on battery power.

Tonight it was like heavy, black velvet. The noise seemed to be coming from behind a heavy black curtain. Whispering....

The beam of his penlight discovered a man and a woman behind the stairwell. They were half-naked. He was white, stocky, 5'8" with short or balding hair. She was white, medium build, 5' 1" tall, with big hair and a lot of Mexican silver. Obviously borrowed for the occasion, from a mutual acquaintance....

They were having sex.

Trixie, and Elmo!

Who'd have believed it, but it was beginning to make sense....

Of course, he told them to cease. Trixie was manic, raving about the toilet. He escorted them off the floor, and watched as they descended the dark-varnished stairs, and headed straight for the Beastly side.

At least THEY knew where they were going....

He switched on the 2nd and 3rd floor hall lights, and the yard light, all which they'd turned off to conceal their deeds.

He saw where they'd smashed the toilet in the washroom of apartment 20. It wasn't connected to the plumbing, because the washroom was under renovation. One of them had sat on it, defecated in it, and tipped it over, spilling the contents onto the linoleum. The crash woke him up.

He noticed that the second floor fire escape was ajar, and there was a condom placed conveniently on the threshold, for NEXT TIME....

*****

Porko didn't want Johnny to introduce him to the Mahmoud the Persian, who sold contraband ciggies for $14 a bag. That made a buck and a half a pack, a fraction of regular price.

Johnny discovered why not.

Porko was loitering outside Emile Durkheim, smoking. Johnny passed, on his way to the Persian.

Porko was on the phone. So avid, wrapped up in his own device(s), Johnny snubbed him. He kept going, to the Persian's. For the ciggies....

Then it occurred to him. Why bother? Porko should get his own ciggies. Johnny would introduce them properly, then Porko could go by himself.

Johnny suspected he'd been raving about Sadam's Men again. They were Persian, too....

Johnny returned, to fetch Porko.

Thing Street Asylum

Porko was still loitering, on Thing Street. He said he was working, showing apartments, every night between 6 and 6:30....

Johnny suspected. He was turning tricks, dealing drugs....

At 6:25 some cow waddled down from one of the assisted housing units over the drop-in next door. She might have been looking for a date, but all she did was talk. About flesh tags....

After 5 minutes, they went. He gave Porko a $20 bill, so he wouldn't be humiliated by asking Johnny for money, in front of the Persian....

Porko entered the Persian's, ahead of him. No more loitering on the corner, waiting for smokes from Heaven, like a CAM-ache client. The Persian was waiting on Quinlan. With several canes, for back-up. He didn't want his old one any more, and wanted the Persian to hide it, till one of his other selves called for it.

The Persian didn't want any more canes. He had half a dozen, behind the cash. Did they think he was Brother Andy?

He winked at Johnny....

Quinlan just didn't want to be seen with three canes. Two was the limit. Burroughs did it all the time....

Then he recognized Porko. How's Trixie?

That was it! He knew the Persian. He'd even introduced him to Trixie.

*****

They had barbecues. They talked about red meat without shame. The butch one liked his raw. He didn't want to be cremated. His stomach growled. Their female guests looked like Marilyn Monroe. The male guests looked like Marilyn Monroe, but a Marilyn Monroe who wished she resembled William Holden before he became a seedy old alky bleeding to death in a L.A. apartment.

They left their Geiger on beside the Mixmaster. The girls heard it. It wasn't cosmic energy from the sun. There were Martians in the vicinity.

The boys headed into the desert. They expected to be gone three or four days. They didn't bother to notify the AEC. Their shirts billowed as they descended the gully, exposing their breasts. The butch one wore his open to the navel. He had more hair. He would survive the encounter.

Jack Pearse did their make-up. He accentuated the stubble on their jaws. He added dark stains to pits, crotch, and crack. They sat on the hood of their jeep, sharing the binoculars, swigging from the filthy canteen.

They spotted a cave that wasn't there yesterday. Lance said he wished he'd studied accounting and worked in an air-conditioned office. He didn't mean it.

They investigated the cave for Martians. They joked that it was probably full of beer cans. Rusty opened a door to a store room. He said he hadn't found anything. He lied. There was a Martian brain inside. It affected him strangely.

Lance said he'd never kissed like that before. They should get away more often.

Yeah, Rusty said. One week in the mountains and we'll have to go to Boystown to recuperate.

What happened in there? Tell me?

Don't you worry your pretty little head.

What about Ann Savage, remember? The girl you were going to marry.

That was yesterday.

You're acting funny. That way you kissed me. You've been working too hard. You've got to see a doctor.

Don't expert me, bitch.

Rusty frowned at the roof. He blew a satellite out of the sky. Wait till he saw Ann Savage.

*****

Lights flashed like a spaceship on Thing Street.

The last time was a bomb-scare at Money-Mart.

They wouldn't cash Porko's welfare check. The fat bitch at the wicket complained. A membership card from the World Wildlife Fund, a coupon from Asylum Donuts with his name printed on it in block capitals, and an ARCHIVES VOLUNTEER name-tag from Thing Street Asylum weren't valid I.D.

In the effort to master his emotions, Porko bit his thumb and stamped his foot so hard it went numb. He limped away, making a tight little fist and menacing the bland bitch simpering on the safe side of Money Mart's wire-reinforced bomb-proof plate-glass window.

*****

Someone pressed Johnny's buzzer at 2 o'clock.

Pioneers of Alienation

It was not a test.

He never answered it.

A few minutes later he'd hear one of his neighbors talking downstairs to someone with a key. Then he'd hear footsteps on the dark-varnished stairs, and Cowboy's door open and shut.

It was usually his native girlfriend returning from some Thing Street bar.

The West Indian wife kept the keys. Johnny saw the Reader's Digests at the mailbox. They were in her name....

Instead, his phone rang. He recognized Porko's number.

He'd rather press the buzzer than come to his door. Trixie's was at the end of the hall. She'd watch through the spy-hole. He didn't want her to think there was something going on. He didn't want to push her over the edge....

Porko invited him to Number 1.

Johnny traced his way through the maze. Porko's door was open.

Johnny was uncomfortable. He never knew who'd show up.

He didn't want to know....

Maybe Dead Guy, who wasn't entirely dead or at least not as stone-dead as he pretended to be. He'd whistle and caress Porko's new cupboards, that Citizen Hearse installed after the fire.

How come Porko got new cupboards? Caress, lick.

Natasha had warned Porko a thousand times not to leave the door open. Otherwise, residents would enter. Orphans, he called them....

They would see how clean everything was. Globes were screwed into all the light fixtures, and had light bulbs inside. The windows sparkled and had screens on them. The fridge had recently been defrosted. All the burners on the stove worked and the oven had been cleaned.

The orphans would gather around, Zombie-like, opening cupboards and working lights, jealously wondering why their own rooms were never so clean. They would immediately want to move.

They never cleaned or repaired anything. They never even changed a light bulb. Eventually their rooms became uninhabitable and they were forced to move.

Porko was sitting in the old swivel chair that he'd brought with him from Velma's Thing Street Dosshouse. Smoking, of course. He still had to go up to Kirkbride, to clean.

Johnny asked why he buzzed him.

Porko'd forgotten. Something about him and Trixie. Oh, yeah. They were getting divorced. Only not right away. Trixie'd postponed it till after Christmas, so she could get presents from each of his 8,000 siblings.

They were sipping coffee at his aunt's table.

Shadows of Thing Street moved against the Venetian blinds. Very film noir. Most of the shadows were headed towards the drop-in next door.

Everyone at Emile Durkheim, at least everyone who got up before noon, which wasn't many, had to step over the bodies huddled on the front steps in the morning. They were reluctant to be brusque with them, unless they were social workers.

When Natasha gave them the bum's rush, they took their sofa from the drop-in and threw it through her window. That was when she was in Number 1, before Porko succeeded her and she went upstairs....

That required tact....

Which reminded Johnny....

How come Federico Fellini was hurt if he didn't say hello to him going in the Beastly door, but when he passed him outside the drop-in it was clear that he didn't want to acknowledge him. Same thing at Asylum Donuts. Like he thought he was at Cannes....

Wasn't that a double standard?

Porko said no.

You mean different context?

Yes.

False analogy?

Of course.

How come you can see the falseness of my analogies but never your own?

Porko said he was sitting in Asylum Donuts with Jimmy a few days ago. One of Federico Fellini's floozies passed by in high-heels. Porko had just finished talking to Walter Huston, who'd just finished with Fellini's floozy. Porko told Jimmy he was going to stop her on her stroll back and ask her how it was at Walter Huston's.

Jimmy said good luck.

He went outside. She walked right past like she didn't know him.

She was working, Johnny said.

Yes. He knew the difference. He'd just wanted to see what she'd do.

She ignored him, the cunt.

*****

Thing Street Asylum

He did a round on the 3rd floor and confronted Trixie AGAIN: 5'8", black hair, white (possibly Italian, or Greek; most likely SICILIAN, to be exact....).

She was squatting on the same toilet she'd over-turned and broken Saturday night. He told her she had to leave, phoned 911 and waited downstairs.

Officers with badge numbers 696 and 666 intercepted her on Thing Street, just west of Beastly, after hiding out in the Beastly vestibule. They scolded her and assured him. NEXT TIME they'd arrest her. His neighbor down the hall said he'd seen her enter, from the broken fire-escape.

*****

Before Porko and Max, Natasha....

Her monument, the quasi-mythical labyrinth of heating ducts that connected Emile Durkheim House to its Twinned Tower down Thing Street.

She was The Minotaur.

If you seek Natasha, look beneath the floor. Her work is there. She was nearly stuck there herself, crushed by her predecessor.

Because before Natasha was Sheila, who weighted four hundred pounds, and bent the floorboards where she trod....

The Twin Tower was Emile Durkheim's double, other, alternate personality. When Emile Durkheim escalated, it became The Twin Tower....

The Twin Tower was a burnt-out husk, a disaster zone, a blast site, a testing ground, an excavated tomb, a spent shell-casing, an unearthed abortion, a transvestite arsonist....

They lived in terror of the Twin Tower and the TRANSFORMING fire that would transport them faster than drugs, than the Thing Street Car, though it was only a stop away, right after the drop-in that was symbolically situated like a station between them, Emile Durkheim and Hell....

*****

One day it would be fire-works. Flashing lights. Wailing sirens. Burly fire-crews jostling him....

He'd come up Thing Street and find the Towering Inferno where his walk-up had been.

It was, today.

The fire wasn't on the Beastly side. They were so intent on getting back to Thing Street, they barely noticed when they bashed him out of the way.

The third floor stank of burnt plastic.

Later Johnny discovered the fire had broken out behind the fuse-box in the superintendent's room. It sped along the wires, exploding the light switches and the ceiling fixture over Porko's cot.

Johnny thought Porko had been smoking in bed. Notwithstanding the butt marks that indicated where his bed had been, like faded wallpaper where a picture hung, it was an electrical fire. A terrifying thing....

The Atomic Energy Commission agreed. Their representative arrived, a 6'3" giant, in a big truck with flashing lights, and demanded Porko give him a tour. He found minor defects.

Everyone's fuse box affected everyone else's. Elmo, upstairs in 99, would blow a fuse in 1, if he turned his microwave on high. In the winter he used a space heater to heat his drafty room, with its dirty bay windows overlooking Thing Street.

Citizen Hearse insisted. The fire started in Max the Butcher's air-conditioner.

In January.

*****

Turning on the heat was an annual event, but one would think it happened once a decade, judging by the fuss, the trial and error, the ad hoc experimentation.

Johnny and other tenants would complain to the super for days about the heat. The super would pass on their complaints, to Citizen Hearse, who was aware of the problem. He just wasn't doing anything about it.

It was a comic saga. Citizen Hearse would refuse to give the super permission to increase the heat. The super would say he was sorry. His hands were tied, wringing them. The landlord was his boss.

One evening Johnny faxed Citizen Hearse himself. That had an effect, or appeared to. Porko sent Trixie up to the 3rd floor room on the Beastly side. She slowly ascended the dark-varnished stairs, knocked on every heavy fire-proof door, told everyone.

The heat was on. Bleed your radiators!

It wasn't on. Johnny bled it, but only a puff came out. Then he waited for the heat to come up, like a cat at a mouse-hole. Nothing!

He lost patience, and called the City's access number. It was intended to empower losers like him.

They gave him the number of someone at apartment standards who processed heat-related complaints. He dialed the number.

A man answered, who said after midnight all he could do was record his complaint and pass it on to the inspector later in the morning. He'd hear from him then.

The dispatcher called, a woman this time. Johnny went over the details.

Finally he got a call from the inspector to say that he was parked on Beastly. Would Johnny please come down and let him in?

The Inspector was a courteous Middle-Eastern man named Shazayam. He extended his thermometer into the middle of Johnny's cell, like a magic wand.

Johnny turned off the oven, and opened the windows.

Citizen Hearse was busted.

For good measure, Johnny asked him if he'd like to take a second reading in his neighbor's room down the hall. That gave it extra authority.

Johnny rapped on her door. Carlotta opened. Johnny saw that her oven was open, too. She wasn't the sort to bake anything, so he assumed her heat was off.

He was explaining the situation when the inspector entered ahead of him with his thermometer extended, like a wand.

Carlotta’s pimp shouted from the couch, where he was sleeping naked....

His wand extended....

Sorry, Johnny said.

Carlotta frowned, at something. Behind them....

The tall, sepulchral figure slowly ascended the dark-varnished stairs, his apron bulging with hardware....

Citizen Hearse!

The dispatcher had notified him.

Shazayam met him at the head of the stairs outside the neighbor's room, his thermometer extended, like a sword. He'd been in the business long enough, he didn't need to ask who he was.

He immediately recognized the Thing Street slumlord and housing Czar....

He started to tremble.

Why wassn’t I notified. Before Sunday morning!

I called you, Johnny said. But you didn't do anything.

Suddenly Johnny noticed. Carlotta was trembling too.

Don't be angry with her, Johnny begged him. I did it ALL.

I'm not angry, said Citizen Hearse, through clenched teeth. Not even with you.

He turned, flourishing the largest piece of hardware Johnny’d ever seen, for the beneefit of tne entire comatose floor, only nobody wanted her radiator bled.

Well, since I’m here already, he said. As Carlotta closed the door softly behind them....

It was Sunday morning....

*****

It had been a broom closet till 30 years ago, when Citizen Hearse reconfigured the building, to make more money.

It was below code, everything was.

Johnny was appalled when he realized that most so-called apartments were really broom closets, or walk-in freezers with stove, fridge, and sink. Their bathrooms were across corridors, formerly hallways between broom closets.

What might have been acceptable between different rooms of the same apartment was gross between apartments, separated by what had separated rooms.

Flaccid dicks flashed, greasy fat cheeks farted, anticipating the crapper.

He was living in an old-fashioned doss-house, worse than Velma's, the crazy one he'd eloped from down Thing Street, bigger, harder to control, worse-managed.

He remembered Max the Butcher's stories that Emile Durkheim House had been a brothel, owned and operated by Al Capone, who convalesced there during spontaneous remission. It was conveniently situated near Lake Hogtarry, before the Hardener Distressway and income tax severed access.

Some things thought Citizen Hearse was his son. Or his reincarnation....

Johnny's cell had a toilet. At least he didn’t have to share it with Roghozin, or the enigmatic Mr. Usually. Citizen Hearse was always reminding them that Omar usually did the chores. Since the Omar they knew never did anything around the place, they pretended it was some other Omar, Omar Usually.

Johnny thought Mr. Usually was the very same public-spirited philanthropist who wanted to wire him the fortune of the former president of Rowanda, if only he'd send him his personal banking information.

*****

Johnny's cell was also under the radar of the cable company, which hadn't terminated the previous occupant's account, because he owed them money. Not cutting the cable was staving off the inevitable. Meanwhile, the account grew.

Angry-looking collection letters appeared in Johnny's mailbox, which he thoughtfully returned to the cable company marked No Longer At This Address, but they refused to take the hint. The letters continued, making him nervous. He shouldn't have worried.

Everyone at Emile Durkheim House was under the radar.

It was cheap. When he told colleagues in the shelters that he paid $400 a month, they whistled. With a toilet? For $400? Unheard of in twenty-first century Hogtown. It was the cheapest apartment in the city, the whole country.

Max the Butcher hid out there, after he got out of stir.

It was like he never left.

Johnny was annoyed because, across the hall, or corridor, Omar was talking loudly on his cell with the heavy fire-door wide open. He noted the fancy haircut. Shingles, they called it.

The door was a factor. Closed, Johnny would only have heard the occasional shouted phrase, over a murmur of indistinguishable expletives.

He would still have heard the phone, though.

It was disturbing, even with the door closed. Despite the fact that Omar's apartment was almost as small as his own, he'd turned the ringer volume to maximum. Omar's callers were madly persistent, letting the phone ring twenty or thirty times, before hanging up.

How long did they think it would take him, to come to the phone across a 10' by 6' cell?

They were lunatics, but who else would call Omar?

Johnny thought he was dealing drugs. That might have explained the persistence, but not the insanity.

Johnny crossed the hall in his boxers and rapped on the threshold. He glimpsed Omar standing a few feet inside. His double-bed took up most of the cell, leaving him a little desk and a chair between it and the door.

A goose-necked lamp shone on the desk, the kind cops used for interrogation in film noir. The drapes were closed, blacking out Thing Street.

He realized all the time Omar was on the phone, he was standing.

Johnny said excuse me. Would you please close the door? I work shifts. I hear everything you say.

Omar must have been in a bad mood that morning, because he ignored him.

Please close it, Johnny repeated.

Omar kept talking about a child and someone else, probably its mother. She was a monster, she wouldn't let him see the kid. Johnny suspected he was talking about his wife, to his girlfriend.

Close it, Johnny said.

Omar exploded. Why are you harassing me? You're nosy!

You're the one with the door open. I'm asking you to close it. Close the door!

Clutching the phone, Omar raved. Johnny figured if he hit him, he still wouldn't hang up. Johnny decided to pretend Omar was a resident in one of the shelters, whom he was telling to leave. He cast himself as the calm but persistent front-line worker, who never got angry or raised his voice. He'd studied anger management.

You have issues, Omar shouted. You're crazy! You hate things!

No, Johnny said. Just their noise. I work nights. Close the door!

Go with Jesus, Omar shouted. He'd trumped him and, by the sound of things, he probably wasn't dealing.

*****

It was the end of the month.

There was brawling before breakfast.

Half the residents had purchased things, with the other half's money. Creditors snarled and swore at debtors, from opposite ends of the TV room. Johnny couldn't get them to shut up.

Rusty told him to stop trying. For what they earned, it wasn't worth getting caught in the crossfire. Let them start punching one another, and the supervisor will give them a lecture, and throw them out.

Joel was supervising. He would, too.

Half an hour later, Johnny saw them coming into the building together, arm in arm.

Everything was fine; they were pals again.

The door-bell hummed like Hydro. It was a turbine, propelling trade.

Pioneers of Alienation

They got angry all over again, at a dealer they admitted last night. He'd preyed on residents before, at the end of the month..

Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre noticed him in the smoking room, and took Johnny aside. She told Johnny he shouldn't be there. Get rid of him.

Johnny said he'd already been given a service restriction and served it, so there was nothing they could do. He'd done his time.

She wanted somebody to give him a strong lecture, the one about getting off drugs and getting a job. Johnny told the supervisor, who asked to see him. Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre listened, from the other side of the glass partition. Johnny pretended to be sweeping, but he was listening too.

The man claimed he didn't really owe anyone any money. He admitted he was a dealer. He'd been getting crack for the residents. Sometimes, they thought it wasn't what they paid for. So they said he owed them....

It was quality control.

Joel said for all they knew, he'd been diluting it.

Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre didn't care, provided she got a cut.

*****

Rain beat down upon the hardening surface for eons. Now, in the sultry depths, the miracle of life begins. Living things appear, reach the land, leaving a record of their coming.

In the upper reaches of the Amazon, a hard-on sticks out of a limestone deposit dating back to the Devonian Age. A paean rushes over, snaps it with his Kodak. It didn't look like no ichthyologist specimen. He'd never seen one like that before.

The shelter had been annihilated. It wasn't a gale that destroyed this shack. Male guests just don't vanish. They were under control when they checked in at 1600.

What in the world....

What is it?

I don't know....

Looks like it'd been broken off of something.... (Transition to lab.)

That point's as hard as railroad steel. (Hitches up lab coat, tries to impale his ass.)

Where do we go from here? (Transition to CONAD.)

The shield that guards the North American Continent.

All of us agree about one thing. This appendage comes from a living creature. As to the creature it was once a part of, we are completely in the dark. Our analyst has been said to reconstruct whole prehistoric creatures from no more than a bone(r), but he has been unable to identify this object.

It's just like the one they found at the Pole. The Pentagon wanted to know to whom it belonged. A structure of gristle and cartilage as large as this could only have served one purpose....

The real story is what they found at the shack. It's five feet long, mottled green in colour.

What are you boys talking about? She was beginning to get interested, the bitch.

It's part of something that must be incredibly, unbelievably huge.

It's one of the biggest creatures that ever lived.

Take no chances before any unusual flying object.

A giant phallus has been sighted flying over Washington. This is an alert. This is....

*****

Miss Ann Savage kept thinking about Rusty and Lance. How expertly he removed his growth. Shelter Standards regarded self-interested liaisons with clients strictly as conflict of interest. Surely a hand-job was an egregious form of same. Yet, as front-line workers they were expected to exercise discretion. Wasn't a hand-job that deescalated a growing crisis within the bounds of discretion, if not good taste?

Perhaps it was where shelter workers and other things parted company, but every day they made judgment calls that required them to sacrifice their principles for the sake of their clients. No, she reflected, it was all in a day's work.

The trouble was, it was her work too. Why should Rusty enjoy all the opportunities to prove what a man he was? She was a fantastic woman. Greater, even. He would have known as much, had he been capable of appreciating women. He was of another bent. Not only did he fail to realize, he prevented everyone else.

She was the greatest. He stood between her and self-realization. Lance had achieved the greatest self-realization of any man she'd ever seen.

She crept like a somnambulist to Rusty's apartment. The basement door was wide open. A twenty year old stripling had just left. Rusty had neglected to lock it. Instead he'd donned his loudest pair of Hawaiian boxers. Miss

Thing Street Asylum

Ann Savage entered stealthily. Rusty was depleted. He'd filled a large picnic hamper with warm water and epsom salts. He was soaking his feet in it, in front of his powerful computer. Excerpts from his latest downloaded gay movies flashed across the expensive flat-screen monitor. He especially liked the one about the cowpokes who buggered one another in a summit meeting.

Honey, Miss Savage murmured, wrapping her arms around his neck, ruffling his tuft.

Rusty gasped with surprise, then relaxed, recognizing the hag.

Babe, he said. Another short turn around?

Not this time, Honey.

We just had the greatest unprotected sex. It's the only kind worth having.

Yeah?

Yeah, Baby. What's up with you?

You are.

She was holding the powerful computer, whirring and flashing like a nuclear reactor. With sudden fury she dashed it power-source first into the briny water. The juice hit him immediately, popping his nipples like Christmas lights. The hydro flickered, just like in the movies. That was why molls prefered to wait in the dark. There was nothing the matter with the Falls.

The tuft of which he'd been so proud had vaporized. He didn't care. He was dead.

Ann Savage told everyone at work how she'd gone to Rusty's apartment and found him suicided with his computer in a foot bath. No one believed her.

*****

Two gorillas arrived from Correction Services Dadania.

Dressed like Dadanian Customs officers.

They released them at the lights and sped off, peeling rubber for several blocks down Thing Street.

Their previous address was jail. They didn't have any I.D. They'd eaten it on the way in.

They were built, like gorillas. With appetites to match. That made Johnny uneasy when he monitored the line-up. He carried the clicker. It was a little counting device. It reminded him of what paper boys used. It had a little button that he pressed every time Adam served someone dinner. He could operate it with one hand. He used to use a pen and paper. That was awkward.

When the gorillas arrived it was like castanets. They demanded seconds as soon as they were served. The queue got restless. One of the braver residents warned them. He'd call staff. The lead gorilla pointed at Johnny with his jaw. Staff's right there. Johnny should have made an issue of it, but the gorillas were too big. He remembered Rusty's advice. Don't get beat up for what they pay us. That must have been the royal plural, because they paid Johnny even less than him.

The clicker was dancing flamenco by the time the gorillas made it to a table with three or four plates in each massive paw. This table's saved, they told the gang that always ate at the table right in front of the TV. The brave one asked what they meant. His table-mates understood. They went. He followed.

While they were gorging themselves Johnny went into the dorm. He noticed their luggage on top of a bed. There was no one around. He was only checking to see whose it was. Inside he found a little cellophane bag. It was their stash. He put it in his pocket. He crept to Lance's bed, in the women's dorm.

*****

He was working the midnight shift with Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre. She was a gay Hell's Angels Mama, a tautology.

She was the rising CZARINA of Shelters and Homelessness.

The first rung on the ladder of success(ion) was suck-holing Citizen Hearse, incumbent Czar, operator of a growing glow-ball franchise of psychomes.

She was a spoiled priest, a ruined nun, an apostate sodomite who'd risen from relief to full-time permanent management literally over night.

She fitted right in. So did he....

She was a fat cow, with tonsured black hair, because she'd been in orders, that she'd invented for herself. Why she left, was the Unanswered Question.

She could've used some Joline.

Johnny volunteered some likely answers.

Originally he thought it was for not being a top in a hierarchy that disdained bottoms except as acolytes and choir members, but Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre was such a complete hypocrite he dismissed that scenario out of hand.

It was for something even more twisted than secret sodomy in the Roman Mafia.

Pioneers of Alienation

A big brave was arguing with The Vixen. He said the Mothers separated him from his family, to have their way with him.

He wondered if The Vixen wanted to make up for it by getting him a ham sandwich.

Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre said breakfast was at 8:30. He had 6 hours to go. Don't argue with Mother!

It was Unchristian.

Who the fuck ever said she was Christian.

He retired, defeated.

Vixen Foxy Weasel-Threatre was toughened by 20 years of doing good for churches, food-banks, psychomes, and shelters. She considered working for God a demotion....

Johnny answered a desperate phone-call from a homeless man who'd just been evicted from a rough shelter nearby and was feeling suicidal, a danger to himself and others.

He gazed at The Vixem, wondering what to do, since it was already 3 in the morning.

She'd been spiking her cola with rum, from the flask she wore on her hip.

Get his name, she commanded, thickly. Check him out.

Johnny saw that the man had stayed there before, and been given a service restriction for calling Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre a stupid, fat, lazy, fucking COW.

Johnny thought the part about COWS was really uncalled for. They gave milk.

He told the man sorry, there was a problem.

The man started balling. Johnny regarded The Vixen again.

Hang up, she snarled.

Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre would wolf a big platter of shelter food at the desk, while copy-editing The Bible....

It was her collation....

She liked to draw parallels between the shelter and Mother Church.

Johnny said the difference was the residents were plain poor, whereas the monks had taken vows of poverty, and broken them.

Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre wondered, unctuously, if he'd like a little job.

At 3 in the morning? He already had one.

Take my charger to the kitchen. Scrub it.

He sterilized it first.

Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre observed, belching, that she'd never met a tall man yet, who wasn't hiding something big in his boxers.

Alapaloozah, C. Lamprini Eel, her concert pianist. They were all rather on the short side....

She asked Johnny if he'd had any contact with his family.

Isolate them, get them away from their families....

She was trying to discover, if he'd be missed....

The last time was 2 weeks ago. It was Elvira, after they hadn't spoken for 20 years.

She phoned at Christmas, to ask if she owed him anything, if he needed anything.

He hated Christmas....

Even more than Wild Kingdom....

It was a trap, regarding their mother's estate.

He said he was waiting for the final disbursement from the executor, their brother.

She knew about that. That wasn't what she meant.

Johnny didn't think there was anything else, where he was concerned. However, he knew somebody who needed work. She had several houses in the city, and Porko was the janitor at Emile Durkheim. He could clean, paint, repair things....

She said she could have used him 3 years ago, but she'd decided to sell her mansions. To Citizen Hearse. For psychomes....

Johnny said Porko could also program computers. He described how he was always downloading updates for builds that he didn't have any application for, didn't even have a computer for, unless he could get his hands on that object of desire, that cynosure, a genuine STULTAL VULGA69....

He could lift heavy objects....

She said the VULGA was over-rated, but she had cats, of which she was inordinately fond, to whom she felt hugely indebted, for all the hardships they'd endured, flying in the luggage compartment of her jet wherever the P/Bigge Bank's vast interests dictated she go. They lived in compounds, cowering in her lap while taciturn blacks chauffered her through the bunds of foreign, dog-infested capitals....

She wanted to make it up, to them.

Johnny extolled Porko's virtues. His intellect....

It wasn't a matter of intellect. It was a matter of sincerity.

He wanted to say good luck! and hang up again, but he was insincere....

Johnny added honesty to his list of Porko's virtues, but too late not to appear as an after-thought....

She'd heard enough about Porko. What about Johnny?

He told her about Shelters and Homelessness, about his interview at Emile Durkheim House at Ground Zero, beside Satan.

She said she knew about Satan. It was her husband's Last Address.

Too bad, Johnny said. She'd driven him out.

She wanted to know why he was doing such negative things.

He paused long enough for her to remember that she worked for a bank.

She hung up, that time.

Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre farted in her sari and swigged from the liter bottle of RC cola, after she spiked it.

After curfew she'd ransack the clients' lockers, for dope. Who knows, maybe she'd get pregnant by one again. It was shaping into a good night ....

How could the system be negative?

Johnny knew a few ways. Dependency, false entitlement. Most workers weren't doing anything, except collecting a check.

Some didn't do that much, didn't even show up.

As for collecting checks, their pay was deposited.

*****

MUSIC...
To LIKE
your FASCIST SISTER to....
Even, if you
can't LIKE your
SISTER....
Because she's big
fat RICH & MEAN....
And you should have SHOT her
years ago....
(What PIMPING
for BIG BANKS in RICH GHETTOS does....)

- SISTER, you've been
all around the WORLD....
But you never got out of
your LIMOUSINE, you STUPID CUNT....
Your chauffeur could have
SHOWN YOU THINGS –
We both know
it isn't SIZE....
Or PERFORMANCE
or even BLACKNESS....
It's CONSANGUINITY
that COUNTS....

Because when you
PLAY...
You BREAK the
RULES....
And, when you
LOSE....
- you ALWAYS
LOSE (stange?)....
Your WATTLES
QUIVER....
You BALL

so HARD....

Somebody
CHEATED?!

YOU DID -
STUPID CUNT!

Who RUINED
your HUSBAND(S)....
Who DROVE them
to YUCCA FLATS....
Made YUCCA FLATS
PARADISE – without YOU!
- BITCH! Who BLASTED
your WOMB?
Worse than the
FURNACES of U.S. STEEL....

Cold,
BARREN....

- YOU DID –
CUNT!

Your WATTLES
QUIVER....

You BALL
so HARD....

Why do BAD THINGS
happen to YOU?

You never get out
of your LIMOUSINE....
- or leave
your CONDO COMPLEX....

You even RIGGED
CHRISTMAS....
Whining how BIG
BROTHER ignored you....

For the FIRST TIME
I rejoiced to be GAY....
FAGGOT was better
than MONSTER....
And you were ALREADY
too FAT anyway....

BUT you were always
so PROGRESSIVE....
You gave new meaning
to GAY PRIDE....
And MAD PRIDE – and
DISABILITY STUDIES....

In designer
KNOCK-OFFS....

O, that last DIG

was CRUEL....

Your CLOTHES were always
the BEST....
And.... I wasn't your
ONLY BROTHER....

You always had a
PLAN B....

Who gives a FUCK
about FAMILY Mental Hell....
With SISTERS like YOU
in a million MAYPOLE CITIES,

Pimpling the fat backside
of this SATRAPY....

Millions more just like
you, making PIGS of themselves....

Now you're into
RENEWABLE ENERGY....

Having RIPPED OFF
everyone ELSE....

You're going for the
ESKIMAUX....

$CAMH – ARREST this
WOMAN!

But you'll put HER
on your BOARD....

Where she'll drive everyone
especially MAD people

TOTALLY FUCKING INSANE....

SISTER, which LOVER
at GOLDMAN SACHS....
Gave you
my NUMBER....
Was it Henry
PAULSON?

Your unexpected phonecall
CURDLED with your BREATH....
CAKED the SKY
With your SHIT....

Won't somebody please
drop one of your 12 HOUSES
on YOU? ALL of them
at ONCE – to make
you REALLY DEAD
at LAST?

It used to be MOTHER
now – it's YOU!!!

Pioneers of Alienation

The WATTLES
QUIVER....

You BALL
HARD....

You just want to
HELP?

The one thing BEYOND even YOUR
Bungling (IN)CAPACITY....

You just want to know -
sensing a certain, ah....
“inexplicable
resentment” ...?!
Do YOU owe
ME... ?

Any
THING?!

NOTHING,
“SISTER” -

“VENOM” -

Except THIS
MUSIC....

*****

Three meals and one snack a day prepared by the caterer. Off-site, no one knew where. He arrived early, with helpers. He pressed the buzzer at the downstairs door, or entered when a resident went out to the food truck. He wore a white tunic, and carried breakfast in an aluminum tray covered with tinfoil. His helpers and some residents carried up the rest. The trays went in the warmer, which Johnny or someone else turned on at 5 A.M.

Breakfast was bacon and hard-boiled eggs, or milk and cereal, or English muffins and eggs, or pancakes and sausage. Lunch was pizza, or hamburgers, or macaroni. Supper was usually chicken, or fish, or roast beef. The menu was taped to the wall between the kitchen door and the door to the TV room. It was ignored, except by residents outraged at the kitchen staff for never following it. They got equally indignant over food that had passed the expiry date, or gone bad.

Yogurt prompted angry calls to the City, because nobody (staff included) knew how to read the date.

The caterer saved used pizza boxes, and stacked them on top of the microwave. They became very greasy. He recycled them to save money.

The residents thought he was cheap. Some even thought he was crooked.

They noticed his heavy gold bracelets. They said he'd bought them with their money. Money that should have been spent on hot food....

The snack prepared by the company chef was usually just a pastry, or a cookie. That was contrary to Shelter Standards! Snack was supposed to consist of food from at least two groups, for example grains and fruit. There was supposed to be hot food....

The company tried to satisfy the standards by distributing bananas. Sometimes there was no snack at all, just rotten bananas.

If the caterer learned that old Ferreira had brought sushi from the Hotel, he'd try to get out of bringing hot food. That too was contrary to the standards, which stipulated that donated food wasn'to be used as a substitute for shelter food.

Donations should complement meals, not replace them.

Even Johnny brought food, packets of instant coffee that he distributed because they came with cream and sugar already added; all they needed was hot water, and they spared him having to put out sugar and creamer, which he was forbidden to do anyway in the evening.

Thing Street Asylum

Before snack time staff dissolved packs of juice crystals in two large, insulated black plastic boxes with press-button spigots. They put them out at 10 sharp, according to the clock beside the nurse's office. If they put them out earlier, there'd be complaints from some residents that they hadn't had a chance to get juice, that it was all gone by the time they got there. If they put them out later, there'd be complaints that they'd been waiting too long on the row of metal benches before the pass-through. If they put out more than two of the thermal boxes, the kitchen staff would complain that they were wasting supplies. The kitchen staff would even complain if they thought front-line staff were making the juice too strong, using two whole packets of crystals per container, instead of one and a half, since (according to the kitchen staff) it amounted to the same thing: waste.

There was a tremendous waste of food, which was nothing compared to the overall wastefulness of the place. Waste of taxes, waste of staff, who were burnt-out, or so poorly managed as to be useless, and above all, waste of the things the place was supposed to save. Lives were wasted, and there seemed to be nothing anyone could do about it.

Some of the residents thought it was free, but everything was paid for by being there....

They couldn't afford it.....

*****

Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre was the oldest supervisor, obese, diseased.... She 'd taken up Zoroaster....

She worked weeknights with Trixie, at a rest-home for transsexual motherfuckers. Weekends she worked for Yucca Flats. She was Finkelburghers's mole....

After she pressed the buzzer, she started to climb the stairs. Staff had time for coffee and donuts, waitng for The Vixen....

Copy-editing was just a front. After Alapaloozah she ran a Porno Theatre that went bust. She was excommunicated. She still owed the Vatican a lot of money. She worked hard to pay them off. She had to, or get assassinated.....

By nature she was lazy, and corrupt.....

Johnny brought an old VCR to work, intending to donate it for the residents to use as a backup. He also brought an old microwave.

The Vixen spotted the VCR as soon as Johnny removed it from his paratrooper bag. She said she needed it.

She wanted to make a movie, in the Men's Dorm....

She suddenly reached out and squeezed his hand, as if communicating something.

He realized, after withdrawing his hand, he'd just given her the VCR.....

The residents called her Foxy.

He hid his microwave in a locker in the kitchen, but she had the keys....

Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre blew up when the caterer phoned. He'd heard from the moles, the old man brought sushi again. That was plenty!

The Vixen told him if he didn't bring the usual SNACK, she'd report him to Citizen Hearse. They were pals; she was hungry....

Where he arrived half an hour later with the goods, she noticed the heavy gold bangles he wore.

She said she'd tell anyway, if he didn't give her one.

*****

Johnny was working with Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre and a Young Turk named Ben. The same man whom The Vixen wouldn't give a towel was acting needy again.

He was a tall, gaunt. Long gray hair. He wore expensive-looking leather boots with pointed toes. He was very pale. He said he was homeless.

The housing worker believed he had housing in the community. Johnny wondered what that meant, since he wasn't aware of any community, except possibly among the residents in the TV room.

The housing worker wanted to know how he'd lost his housing.

He said his landlord was a crook.

Johnny perked up. Sounded like Citizen Hearse.

The landlord claimed he hadn't paid rent, and kicked him out so he could rent the flat to one of his whores.

Yeah, Citizen Hearse!

The housing worker asked him why he didn't present his receipts.

Stupid fucking cow! Couldn't she perceive? He'd steal the receipts too.

That was exactly what the resident said.

The housing worker continued in her inexorably stupid, bovine way. Did that mean he didn't have any receipts from his last address?

Johnny felt like screaming.

Uh, huh. Never one for half measures, Citizen Hearse stole his rent receipts, his bank statements, his passport. The building was a den of thieves, but the biggest crook of all was the Landlord. He never wanted to go back there.

The housing worker said he lost his apartment for non-payment of rent. He spent the money on crack.

The resident returned to the office that evening. He said he felt faint. It was blood sugar. He was diabetic. He'd faint if he didn't get something to eat.

The Vixen said he'd just had supper.

He said he couldn't help it. He was diabetic. Hadn't he just told her?

The Vixen asked if he couldn't wait till snack.

What am I? A manikin? A lifeless dummy? Why don't I just fuck off and die. I don't have anything to live for, anyway.

That wasn't what s/he'd meant. She just wondered why he couldn't wait like everyone else.

Because.... He began again, with mounting frustration.

She said in that case he should get a letter from a doctor explaining that he needed a special diet.

Johnny listened to their exchange from the desk where he sat watching the monitor. When the buzzer sounded and he recognized the person, he pressed the button admitting him into the building. The buzzer never seemed to stop.

Ben crossed his legs, sitting at the computer table behind him.

Tell me I don't matter, the man continued. I'm not worth a sandwich.

Johnny was losing patience, waiting for The Vixen to terminate the interview. Suddenly he stood up, signaling it was over.

All right, he said. We have to get back to work. Go lie down, or smoke something.

He demanded to know if he was being evicted.

No, Johnny said, moving him toward the door. But we have to get back to work. We'll talk later.

All right, you big gorilla. Don't expect me to come back too soon. Under Margaret Dumont's beaming portrait he shouted, don't expect me back, ever!

Ben uncrossed his legs at the computer table, and sighed. According to Shelter Standards they weren't supposed to stand up when addressing a client undergoing escalation. The client would interpret this as a hostile, dismissive gesture, or even a threat.

Really? Johnny had read Ben's incident reports. He came on like gang busters. He'd have decked him.

*****

He heard someone singing, but ignored him, because he seemed to be in a common area, the dining room perhaps. Then, as suddenly, Pagliacco stopped, or went away. Johnny didn't realize he'd entered the dorm, till he heard shouts and a man in a slicker strode past, swearing he'd murder the singer.

The latter followed, complaining that now, on top of bad food and bugs, he had to put up with death threats.

Johnny assured him. It was all right.

The singer escalated. No, it was not all right, having to put up with death threats. He had rights and freedoms.

Johnny wanted to tell him that he had nothing more than a bogus claim on everyone's patience, long since exhausted. He seemed to be suffering from the delusion that it was a blank check. He wished to remind him that he was still a Dadanian Citizen, that universals like rights and freedoms applied to him so long as he didn't exercise them, in which case they would be over-ridden by a clause, for the convenience of the party that wrote it.

Instead, he offered him an invitation.

Come to the office!

*****

Jack was a house-mate....

He interrupted Johnny's meditations....

He wasn't crazy but he was driving Johnny nuts....

Telling him things were BAD....

Johnny knew....

Wondering what made things do CRIMINAL THINGS....

Telling him there were things who KILLED....

Johnny knew that too....

Jack complained about their fellow house-mates.... They were rude.... They were IGNORANT.... They accused him of pissing out his window....

Johnny wondered why....

Jack had no idea.... They said he was dirty.... Equally groundless....

Thing Street Asylum

He had bad teeth.... His hair needed washing.... It was short and black... A cow-lick stuck up like a shark fin.... His glasses were free-frames from Social Services.... He wore black track-pants and a turquoise pull-over.... His socks didn't match.... They bunched up in his flip-flops....

Johnny assured him that not everyone was bad.... He should think about the good things....

Johnny knew that was rubbish.... The bad got all the attention.... They deserved it.... They were higher-functioning.... They presented well....

There was something about that in Swift.... He forgot where....

Jack said it was easier said than done.... Living in a house full of criminals....

True, Johnny thought....

Bozo.... The Ace Telepro from Trinidad.... Their mysterious house-guests....

He knew they were both full of shit.... He couldn't think of anything else to say....

Jack usually had some crumpled papers under his arm.... Covered with gibberish.... Today he just had a cup of coffee.... Blobs of undissolved creamer floated on the surface.... Sloshed on the sidewalk....

Johnny asked him how the writing was going....

It wasn't.... He was out of paper....

Johnny asked him if he wanted some more.... He knew he did.... He was always begging for paper.... He asked him to wait.... He wasn't sure who needed it most....

A hard call....

*****

Everyone scammed.

A cash only job that paid fifty bucks a week or three thousand.

A worker.

A monthly check.

A free subway pass.

A front volunteering.

At the loco food bank, one could at least get some extra free groceries. What one could lift off the flats in the morning, without anyone noticing.

No one noticed. There were trucks from half a dozen food banks, with names like Feckless Farmer. Each with its own driver and white-coated helpers. The trucks panted at the loading dock, while attendants brought out the flats.

Sometimes, when a truck got too full, it left part of a flat behind.

It wasn't stealing. It was salvaging.

Everyone had something on the side, copy-editing or pornography or social work, like selling crack to seniors down at the Bald Eagle.

It helped the terminals get their minds off death.

*****

Johnny and Porko stood outside the store and talked when the Filipino man entered. Johnny held the door for him. Porko took another puff on his sky-cig and exhaled through his (equine?) nose.

He smoked pot like....

Erich Von Stroheim....

Johnny said he wasn't used to so many things.

He meant Porko's 8,000 brothers, their (in excess of) 10,000 bitches, and of course everyone's special honey, VIXEN FOXY WEASEL-THEATRE G-R-R-R-L....

Johnny was used to dealing with things one on one....

He said he was going to have to work out some sort of time-sharing arrangement with VIXEN FOXY WEASEL-THEATRE G-R-R-R-L and MOMMIE DEAREST....

Porko wanted to know where he'd figure in such an arrangement....

Johnny said, AT THE BOTTOM....

*****

Jah Lo See entered. She told Johnny she had something to show him. She had finally been kicked out of her dumpy room by the perfidious Citizen Hearse. She showed him the eviction notice.

It was for refusal to pay a monthly rental increase of $3. She hadn't paid it for 4 months; she owed Citizen Hearse $12.

Johnny told her to shut up and pay; it was simpler.

She refused. She shook her fist, defiantly. Citizen Hearse wasn't getting any more of her dough. Not for him and his sluts. No more Cadillacs and pimp clothes that didn't fit. That big fat tub of shit....

She suddenly got very confidential.... Very hush-hush.... Citizen Hearse's good buddy upstairs.... That pimp.... She believed he was printing money.... Before he got busted....

But who cared? She'd talked to her worker.... Trixe Zane.... She was getting a Model Suite.... With the HANDY HOUSING AUTHORITY....

What a swell pad! She'd been waiting since '87....

*****

Jack was handsome and good-natured. He never made trouble....

Except, when he was away the house was a lot calmer. Also, cleaner. There were no trails of coffee slopped from dining room to lounge. Fewer things got stolen. In fact, nothing got stolen when Jack wasn't around. Gabriel even had enough money after supper to buy himself a coffee at Dino's. Usually Jack stole it. He even stole the landlord's cigarettes. He'd light up right outside the big bay window in plain view of everyone.

He wanted everyone to know.

He was a good guy.

He went to the food bank. He told the Holy Fathers that they didn't feed him. He was hungry. Wa-a-a-ah.

He came back with enough food for a family. He opened the jars of peanut butter and the canned goods. He sampled their contents with his finger and left them to rot on his dresser. Everything spoiled. Johnny had to go into his room to throw them out before they drew vermin. When he warned him that food in the room was against the landlord's rules he acted astonished.

Couldn't he make himself a sandwich?

He was a good guy. Not to mention handsome and good-natured.

He knew the rules.

That's why he did it.

*****

Painting the porch was a revelation. The Apocalypse of All Lunacy. A lesson in Moral Insanity. Diseased Affections. Better than James Cowles Prichard.

Johnny laid the step-ladder as a barricade across the veranda and put up a sign:

Wet Paint!
Do NOT Walk Here!

It was like putting out a shingle:

Free Clinic
(Refreshments!)

All the loonies from the fire-escape at Shalom Pizza House. Gang way! Straight to Johnny's home improvements. K.R.A.Z.'s stinking wallabies led the way....

Whatever K.R.A.Z. overlooked Bozo screwed up. Moping down the dark-varnished stairs from his second floor bower....

Lumbering over the barricade. Landing on Johnny's paint in enormous rubber pontoons....

O! Is it not dry yet?

Johnny went into Thorazine Drugs aka Psych-O-Farm-A-C at Thing Street and Rancidvale Ave. Jah Lo See was there in pharmacist drag. She intercepted the regulars. Offering them deals, on neuroleptics....

He told her he was furious. He wanted Hitler to come back and destroy them.

But they are YOUR THINGS, she said. Sarcastically alluding to his history.

Not any more, Johnny said. He was through with them. That porch was too much.

Jah Lo See told him, survivors were just cons with swelled heads! They stole stuff from her. It really burned her the way they said they'd pay her back tomorrow. She got so mad she screamed at them to stop lying. Say the truth.

They were ripping her off....

Jah Lo See told him a story about Hitler. About the time she wanted him to come back too. To get her neighbor. Her father-in-law was getting out of her car. The neighbor pulled ahead.....

In a Hudson....

She flattened the old man against the garage....

Jah Lo See told her to show some respect.
The neighbor told her to learn Good English. Maybe then....
In front of the kids!
They'd be run over first....
Jah Lo See wanted to tell her neighbor what she wanted Hitler to come back and do to her.
Instead she waited till the neighbor came out of her garage. She walked right up to her face.
You are just a fucking racist bitch, she said. Which wasn't perfect, but it was GOOD ENGLISH.
Then she noticed the neighbor's eight year old son standing. Wide-eyed. Beside his mother.
Hitler could stay home in Hell, because THAT made it PERFECT.

The next time K.R.A.Z. traipsed across the lawn....
Boasting how he smeared all Johnny's electric green Zoncolite porch paint....
He'd smash his fuckin' face....

*****

He met Porko getting his mail, by the aluminum boxes at the Thing Street door. A form letter from Pigge Nasty, of the National Socialist Party of Dadania. He threw it in the garbage. It was already full of them....

Porko invited him into the Posterior Airing Court at Emile Durkheim House. He'd been painting for Marion Davies at The Sands. He still had on his painting shorts. Bermudas. He brought Freke. A Tibetan was there already, with his own Pomeranian.

Porko told him to grab a chair and drag it to the fence, beside the compost. It was light, green plastic. Easy to move, but he felt awkward abandoning the Tibetan. Like he was snobbish, or racist....

He was Dadanian....

The Tibetan's Pomeranian had a hair-cut. It resembled a Chihuahua. The Tibetan cut it himself. At the vet's, it cost eighty bucks. He'd've had nothing left for dope.

Johnny'd been shopping in China Town. He had green peppers and corn in his bag. The dog nuzzled the vegetables, and barked. The Tibetan didn't control it, though it was obviously annoying. Johnny was annoyed.

Porko shouted. If he didn't want the dog in his bag, he should get out of the yard. That was the Tibetan's attitude he was expressing, the Dalai Lama notwithstanding.

Johnny felt guilty, sitting at the opposite end of the garden. In the green, paratrooper's bag he had three bottles of Viet Namese fish sauce. He offered one to the Tibetan, to be nice.

He said his country didn't have fish. Mountains! Spiritual! Not much, politically.
China, Johnny said.
He nodded, grimly. Beijing!
Prayer can't defeat tanks.
He stopped nodding. Maybe....
Johnny considered. They needed a Blood and Iron Llama.
Bismarck Buddha....
Hitler Llama....

*****

Michael sat on the newly painted porch. Smoking. He was passive-aggressive. He played victim to get his way. Every time Johnny heard his high-pitched voice, begging for change to make a quarter so he could buy a cigarette, he remembered their degradation.

It wasn't the role. It was the state.

When Michael didn't get the change on the steps he'd walk out onto the sidewalk and solicit. He'd return with enough for a pack. He wouldn't buy a pack at once, but two or three cigarettes. It was controlling. He could bother the Koreans all day....

Once he had his cigarette he didn't care. He'd take a few puffs and throw it away. It was an excuse for sitting on the front steps, breaking another rule. Deane warned him that if he caught him there he'd cut him off a whole day. No hand-outs. He'd still get money though. They were only, as Deane used to say, slowing him down.

Now Michael sat on the steps more than ever. It was possible that Johnny only noticed it more. He was sensitive about it. In the winter Michael had great salt stains on the seat of his pants. Deane said he had a salty crack.

Michael asked Johnny for a cigarette.

He said no. He said he'd noticed him sitting on the steps. He thought it was inconsiderate. Michael tossed what was left of his cigarette, nearly all of it.

Sorry, he said. In a man's normal speaking voice.

Johnny wished he had a tape-recorder.

*****

It was a few minutes after 6 o'clock. Johnny had just returned from the Crypt down Thing Street. He removed his knapsack and put it on the porch, entered the narrow passage between his psychome and the flop-house next door, and carried the green garbage bag to the curb.

Michael came out and sat on thet steps, where anyone else coming out would trip over him. He was smoking as usual, taking rapid shallow puffs on his cigarette, which he'd throw away half smoked, or leave to scorch the mat.

He annoyed Johnny, sitting where Deane told him not to. Johnny asked him if he remembered how he'd knock on his bedroom door on Sunday afternoon, to invite him for a walk.

He'd buy him coffee at the loco Coffee Slime, where they had a glassed-in smoking section. He always made sure he had a pack of cigarettes. The last time he'd even bought him a chocolate éclair. Michael said he couldn't imagine how long he'd been wanting one.

At the end of every walk he'd tell Johnny how unhappy he was. Outside the things in the cars were too sexual. They stared at him in pajamas. Inside they pushed him around. He was so quiet, and so small.

Johnny had seen him approach strangers without even looking to see who they were. He'd march out of the House and ask the first things he met for a hand-out. He'd get it too.

Johnny would politely disagree. He was quiet, but no push-over. Then he'd give him a few cigarettes. That was what he wanted.

He remembered.

Then forget it, Johnny said.

*****

Johnny went to J. Zeus Murphy's latest gig, his Zombie Crypt Store and Computerland Emporium, to buy a cheap laptop, an obsolete Jurassic hand-me-down of corporate tax write-off trash-largesse.

A coelacanth....

He was supposed to be grateful for the opportunity to buy it for 25 dollars, when they wrote it off for a thousand.

He wasn't. He couldn't type on a coelacanth, and whille it hailed from time immemorial, its own memory was remarkably short.

You wretch, J. Zeus Murphy denounced him. Your motives are totally selfish. J. Zeus farted, belched, reached for a fresh slab of Shalom pizza, and stuffed it down his craw while listening disinterestedly to Johnny's pathetic stammering apology.

How true, Johnny confessed. He was motivated by the totally selfish desire to plaster copies of Pioneers of Alienation all over the web for free. How selfish can you get?

Johnny mentioned, he was an artist....

J. Zeus wanted to know what kinder artist? Hurry up! He had to shit....

Johnny said, the ordinary kind....

J. Zeus Murphy said he himself was a junkie, a pusher, a rock star, an impresario.... A FUCKING CRIMINAL, a CON-artist!!!

Johnny didn't know. He was a stupid, stupid lamb. Big J. Zeus had the right to cheat a mere artiste, like Johnny....

A lousy writer....

What kinder writer?

Lousy, he said. He told him about his asylum book.... His scheme to get it posted on-line.... So the world could revile it....

J. Zeus said he was a kinder psychiatric advocate himself. Told Johnny to bring a copy into the store.... Maybe he could help himself, er, help him out, he meant!

Johnny left the store smiling and happy. He looked back at the flashing neon over the door. It showed a shabby-genteel artsy Bohemian type in a frock coat and pince-nez getting kicked in the ass by a kinder Korean Army surplus boot wielded by an ear-ringed skin-head in army fatigues. The poor artist's coat-tails flew up, exposing his anus to the punk's steel-reinforced toe. His pince-nez bounced and shattered on the end of their ribbon. Har har har!!!

J. Zeus Murphy's Zombie Crypt Store REBOOTS THE WORLD!!!

Johnny didn't see J. Zeus Murphy lift a heavy matted cheek releasing an oregano fart that briefly transformed his Zombie Crypt Store's entire northern exposure into the sunny-spiced terrace of an Italian pizzeria.... Bums sniffing it raised their down-at-heel reeking feet a centimeter higher.... Stepped springily....

He didn't have to see. He just knew....

Thing Street Asylum

*****

A hairy corporate ape, caged all day in an office, chained under the desk, looks forward to nothing so much as strapping himself into the cockpit in nothing but greasy sneakers and ball cap and clenching the gear-shift between his powerful thighs for a little night flight in the manner of our latest little prince, JFK, Jr.

All topped off with delight in the little things of life....

Meanwhile J. Zeus Murphy is marketing pirated copies of PIONEERS OF ALIENATION & 50s SCI-FI AT THING STREET ASYLUM on the world-wibe web. He's splitting the proceeds with Max the Butcher and Babyface Marjoram. They say they wrote it in a catatonic stupor lasting three weeks straight. The mesmerist was Professor C. Lamprini Eel, Ph.D. J. Zeus Murphy dressed up like Nurse Trixie Cavell and took dictation. They heard voices....

I saw Max at the Cripp's yesterday, and he didn't look so good.... He'd grown a beard full of unidentified fibers.... He was holding an open seminar in the used book section.... Actually that's tautological because everything at the Cripp's is used, including Max the Butcher.... I didn't get too close, because I was afraid when he noticed me he'd escalate, and even at a distance he stank so badly of piss I had to vomit....

I heard him use big words like de-institutionalization, de-rationalization, and pseudo-intellectual (pronounced swado).... When he finally noticed me he acted even sneakier than usual. He interrupted his lecture to hide behind a bunch of dictionaries. He was itching to send another hate-letter to my boss, warning him that I intended to fuck the whole department to give it AIDS, etc. Too bad I haven't worked in twenty years.

Well, you wrote in your profile that you liked to putter, so you should move to Thing Street, the most putterable neighborhood on earth, because it's disintegrating. The WHITE SQUIRRELS are as big as cats, and the cats have been known to carry off small children lining up outside the food-banks (there's one on every corner). Last night I saw a tabby with a sixty-pound boy in its mouth. The boy was far from dead yet. I watched as the tabby released him to scream and stagger a few steps before it cuffed him dead. I wish the neighbors would tie up their pets, or bury their prey....

Here's a lovely snapshot of the walls of the Lunatic Asylum, and a tree from which the inmates eloped by hanging. The walls are interesting just because they're crumbling so beautifully; the tree reminds me of you (a little) or perhaps I should say you remind me of a tree (don't blush!).

That searching and rescuing with Bruce and the fly-boys sure keeeps you fit. I envy you all those opportunities for male bonding.

I see you in the hangar with Bruce, smoking a cigar as Bruce bends over to polish the white-walls on his Cessna....

His skimpy T-shirt rises over his back.... The buckle pinches a little so he removes his belt....

His jeans slide down his hips, pulling his paisley boxers over his ass, exposing the basis of an enduring friendship....

You study it, carefully....

You remove the cigar from between your lips....

You....

O, there's the closing bell! Son of a bitch! I want to pursue this more circumstantially later....

The flying, the search and rescue, the constant element of danger, the camaraderie with men of action and passion like Bruce and the fly-boys....

Have you considered NASA?

There's that fag librarian again....

*****

I find your notes quite thought provoking! But as much as I hate to appear ignorant, I must admit, I don't fully understand them. Perhaps it is a result of having spent 20 years immersed in the corporate world....

The big search & rescue training exercise this weekend went quite well, with lots of positive learning experiences, with guys in tight jeans....

*****

I remember once when, out of prolonged loneliness during one of my ideal lover's too long absences, I had a one night stand with a very nice young man.

He asked me what I liked to do. I said, touch!

He immediately (and very awkwardly, I'm sure) endeavored to put our penises together. I laughed!

Women complain about phallocentrism....

I have nothing against the penis, but when I said TOUCH I meant (and mean) something more than mutual masturbation, which was what our one night stand was to me.

Which is not to say he wasn't nice....

What I wanted to TOUCH were the particulars, without which I feel there's NO LOVE....

My long-term ideal would have been horrified by anything genital, but I knew every part of his body, every hair and follicle, the way you know the stubble of a field you fly over every day....

Everything is shit....

There's no relationship between my interests and my past and anything I can do to earn a living. I'm trained to be an English prof but, thanks to DILDO Wingnut, the homo-hating NAZI FROM NEW ENGLAND, I can't get a job. He calls me the Fairy Sign-Painter.

Dadanian scholars were decimated in the nineties....

All my references are DEAD....

After what I've been through I could never be a moral spokesman, a figurehead for society, a model for the youth, or a secular preacher like Norrie Freed....

I'd make a good THING MAN.

In Barcelona. They threw the incurables' things over the cliff. Contaminated. No one would touch them. Except Barganzo.

He sold them.

He made a fortune....

*****

W.L., a 32 year old Presbyterian painter who was formerly intemperate, is readmitted on February 8, 1875 for fear of destitution. The Certificate by Dr. Burgess cites W.L.'s low spirited restless condition, and records W.L.'s own complaints of hearing noises around his head, and ringing in his ears. W.L. appears to be suffering from suicidal depression.

The Certificate by Benjamin Workman lists, under facts indicating insanity, W.L.'s delusion that he was unemployable and that he consequently must suffer want and become destitute. Under other facts reported by others, he reports W.L.'s having been previously committed.

Joseph Workman reports, under facts ... observed by myself, W.L.'s labouring under delusions as to destitution. Under other facts observed by others, like his brother he records W.L.'s having previously been a patient. W.L.'s readmission might have been an embarrassment, but he records it as a vindication:

I have known him before, in the years 1872-73 when he was nearly 12 months under my charge in the Hogtown Asylum for Insane, and I now have no doubt of his insanity.

*****

I heard high-pitched humming, like the wind in a power-line, or the soundtrack of Killers From Space ....

Naturally, I thought of you and your exercises....

Butch cycled by in short-shorts, his runners tied together around his neck....

Hard to believe, he used to drive a MUSTANG....

He must have been in remission....

The shit-blond hair with the complexion that blushes at a word, the classically sculpted mouth and nose, wonderful to touch, and TRACE....

The strong, compact body, a whole country or at least a territory, maybe the NW Territory, with its sparsely treed Precambrian Shield....

His chest looked like a stump-lot from a Cessna....

*****

Yes, this is where we theorize, and otherwise relieve ourselves on, CYCLISTS, those strange helmeted creatures, that sometimes menace, always divert us, in gay-bars and restaurants, even on Thing Street.

Here are some likely headings to explore. And, oh yes, before we proceed, we should qualify that by cyclist we mean MALE cyclist, not because we're sexist, or misogynistic, but because we're gay. If you want to theorize the FEMALE, just beat it.

1) Glorifying the Cycling Animal. What are the common physical attributes of the cycling male? What can one reasonably expect from one's cycling friend, or lover? Great legs? A tanned and tawny breast? These are surely some of the positives, but what about the negatives? Blisters? Sore and battered feet and even (ugh!)

FUNGUS (so disfiguring and smelly, and you risk athlete's hands whenever you give him a massage, etc.). Discuss with plenty illustrations, and samples.

2) Behavior. What strange, erratic behavior characterizes this exotic? Whom is he likely to date? Does he ever get out of those shorts? Does he shine as a conversationist, then fall asleep at the bar, stiffing you with the bill? Does he entertain you, but only to a point, turning on you suddenly, at a perceived slight to Eddy Merckx, or some other GOD of CYCLING? Does he get drunk going home, and assault motorists at the lights?

3) The BUTCH CYCLIST. Now girls, if you haven't been run over by one already, you will be, so pay close attention. This variety can always be spotted right away, by its rich breast plummage (of which it is inordinately proud), that it characteristically displays over the low-cut décolletage of its V-necked Italian sports-shirt, that is if it's even wearing a shirt (unlikely!).

In its nest, it's invariably buck-naked, in which case such details as breast plumage pale by comparison to this MATING CRY, that it emits when it sees females and, when it's sufficiently drunk, cute guys: HEY, BABES! LIKE MY HARD TIGHT ASS?!

Which brings us, insensibly, to this characteristic, not really one of Butch's selling points, since SCRAWNY could be the word for it, and RATTY not entirely unkind....

Its characteristic expression is stunned, or slightly tasered.

Characteristic verbal expressions are IT ROCKS, ROCKET SCIENCE (indeed, almost anything with rocks appeals to this bird), and, whenever it feels its (butch) masculinity has been impugned (however unintentionally, since it's pathologically sensitive on this point), WHAT AM I? AN OLD WOMAN?!

Need we answer? This bird doesn't appear to really like even young ones very much, and vice versa, though probably it just doesn't like anyone PERIOD.

When it sees a car it cries CAGE! CAGE! and truly, that's where it shoud be!

Butch is convinced that the melting of the ice caps and approaching 2nd Ice Age are god's punishment on motorkind for running him over that time last year.

I say (cautiously), Baby (he's so cute, just a big BABY), GLOBAL WARMING has something to do with it too, not wanting to set him off, since he has a terrible hair-trigger temper, off-bike and no beer for 15 minutes.

No, he rages, it's the APOCALYPSE! He'd already marked the BIG ANNIVERSARY in his day-book, and was stock-piling candles from THE PERSIAN, for TOTAL ECLIPSE.

Not to mention TIDAL WAVES, EARTH QUAKES, and CYCLONES? Truth is, nature doesn't give a fuck, not about motorheads or cyclists either. Maybe we're helping it out, but it doesn't need our help, and it's going to get us anyway, no matter what.

Look at the dinosaurs. Think it cares about cyclists? Ha!

Butch has upwards of a thousand bikes, that he's in constant process of dismembering and reassembling, like Baron Frankenstein, the Monster Maker. He fondles gear shifts, exclaiming IT'S A-LIVE! IT'S A-LIVE, just like Colin Clive, whom he strikingly resembles, in many ways.

When he gets really really drunk, SLOPPY drunk, he gets all weepy and tells me, ANYSHIKLE (hick!), chooz a bike, anny wun, itch yours! I know that, by the dawn's sobre light, he'll be disconsolate with grief at having only 999 cycles left, and whichever one I take, THAT one will be his darling favorite, his baby.

So I know better than to take advantage of him when he's drinking, by accepting one of his rotten crates. Besides, they really are monsters, that he searches for all over Tring Street in dumpsters and alleys, like Dwight Frye, always looking for a SUITABLE BRAIN. That's where the Baron's trouble started.

I'm sure Butch's babies are made from criminal bike parts, bikes that killed their masters and were abandoned or discarded as road-kill.

In the morning, I tease Butch by reminding him about that bike he promised me.

Then he's himself again, a mean sober. Promise? What promise? He thinks I want to steal the kids. He can have them. They're resemble their father. They're sociopaths, and they're out to get him.

Butch goes CRAZY. He sits all day in front of his computer, drinking stout and inflating bike-hit stats. The drunker he gets, the higher the score. Then he darts out the front door buck-naked (he never gets dressed anymore) and stops traffic. He especially hates delivery trucks and cop cars.

When I take him for his walk I'm afraid to let him off leash. Drinking all day, he naturally has to pee, so of course he whizzes against the nearest cop cage.

I don't know how he manages to hit one every time, when otherwise blinded by booze, but he does. He's just got an unerring pointer-dog instinct for cop cages to pee on.

He's got a bad prostate too, from all that bouncing on his ass, so it takes him half an hour to go. Some party piece.

It embarrasses me when he barks at stop-lights.

Is he really INSANE, or do all cyclists act out this way? Worried about the boy!

Pioneers of Alienation

Butch has a gut. I don't mind. The more Butch, the better I say, but he's invented a new physiology to account for his hairy convexity as other than a BEER gut. Stout, in his case. It isn't big, but neither is he, and it sticks out.

He insists it's something I didn't think existed, and still don't. Cyclist's lungs! His lungs are unnaturally developed from chasing cages all day. I'd have thought from shouting at them. Whatever their origin, Butch insists they extend way down into his abdomen, pushing out his otherwise normal gut.

I hate to think what might happen, if he keeps it up. His balls shoved out his ass?

That's not his only medical delusion. Butch risks life and limb every day, dodging Thing Street traffic which, as any pedestrian knows, consists almost entirely of low-grade morons who were licensed when they should have been certified. He can't wait for that stupid cow in the Honda up ahead to open her door without looking, so he can run into it at full speed, so he can maim himself all over again, and have fresh material (himself) to bitch about for another year. He'll always be that renowned Thing Street cyclist, recovering from a nearly fatal crash. The movement needs martyrs.

Meanwhile, our hero won't drink Thing Street tap water, because it might have germs. Somebody told him there were lead pipes in Emile Durkheim's TWIN TOWER. There didn't have to be. Just the idea in Butch's mind was enough to drive him crazy.

That's Butch. The man I love.

Those bike parts at Thing and Dung are just how Butch likes them. Wrecked! More dirty work at the crossroads. Fellini et al., from THE DROP INN. Criminal bike parts, for a brand new FRANKENCYCLE! It's A-LIVE....

It's HOT....

Mayor Gasman should give Butch a medal for FREE ENTERPRISE!

Butch should give me one too.

I'd settle for a kiss.

O.K., a handshake. At least until he's had a few.

Like many Sprocketheads, Butch is an I.T. boy. He comes over, if it's raining that is and the Eddy Merckx boys aren't around, drinks all your beer while attempting to fix your new quadcore, wrecks it worse, blames Bill Gates for being a motortard, and generously offers to take it off your hands for FREE, or the cost of another two-four.

When the two-four runs out, and Butch invites me over (say, would you mind stopping by the Beer Store on the way?), I see he's got my wrecked quadcore up and running. That was easy, wasn't it?

When I ask him to loan me one of the museum fossils that he has scattered among all his bike parts, he gets all anal with me. Not the way I like, either.

Looking even more tasered than usual (see picture), he shouts NOT THAT ONE! That was worth serious money in '86.

Stupid, greedy me! How about that Commodore 64 then?

Should Butch shave his breasts? Yes! I don't know how many times Butch has crashed, by getting his chest hair tangled in his handle-bars. That luxuriant muff will prove his destruction. At the very least, he's apt to lose a nipple.

That would be a shame, because Butch's nipples are really another of his selling points - two more, I mean! Especially when he puts on that skin-tight Iron Maiden t-shirt.

They don't call him BUTCH for nothing!

P.S. Although Butch is a CYCLIST and an I.T. BOY, he is is NOT a FAG!

P.P.S. He DOES have a GREAT RACK!!! Swell pics later!

He really is. Insane, I mean. He's GOTH. He dresses up like a skeleton and throws crates on things' lawns. To cheer them up. What a nut!

Naturally, they just want him off their property. The sooner, the better.

Butch comes back from cycling all pumped up. He gets naked, grabs a brew, boots up an old Lance Armslong flick (or some Fast Eddy Merckx) and beats his meat till it squirts.

It's such a routine, he keeps a bottle of Windex beside the monitor.

He especially likes it when the Cycle Boys ride by in formation, all salty and stinking.

When I point out that this seems SLIGHTLY GAY of him, he gets all bitchy.

Lance Armlong is NOT a FAG (but just look at those thighs, those ankles - CRAZY!).

Sure, Butch. What about YOU? In your too-tight T-shirt and tiny fruit boots (and a red tennis racket stenciled over your left nipple). Come on!

Frankly, I don't think Butch likes girls. It's his old lady imitation. So cutting. You should hear it sometime.

Tell me, girls, is this normal cycling behavior, or is Butch MAD? I think all that bouncing on his ass, affected his brain.

Meanwhile, what's a girl to do? I suppose for starters I'll have to wear a slicker when we watch TV , and hope he doesn't get it on the chips.

I LOVE sour cream and onions, though.

Come on, girls. It's HARD to love a cycling man, I need your support!

P.S. Butch's smells like bad sardines. The cat goes MAD! If only he'd been Chinese....

He never became a doctor but he still liked Alena.

*****

A forty-four year old single Church of England clerk, G.C. was committed on July 3, 1878, for melancholy and general apathy attributed in part to visceral derangement. On the Certificate he completed Dr. Lett reports that G.C. does not answer any questions and seems anxious to get away but without any fixed purpose. He notes G.C.'s neck wound, which G.C.'s brother, the Rev'd J. C., attributed to a suicide attempt. Dr. Lett also reports that Inspector Langmuir had told him that G.C. had been in gaol but had had to be transferred immediately for certain urgent reasons.

Dr. Zimmerman similarly notes G.C.'s melancholy behavior, including his refusal to answer any questions. He adds, under facts ... communicated ... by others, that G.C. is addicted to masturbation and, moreover, that he has lately shown a strong aversion to female society.

Workman reiterates most of the above observations, adding that G.C. has been subject to seminal involuntary emissions. Strangely, given his tendency to indicate it as a factor in far less obvious cases, Workman does not note G.C.'s masturbatory practices, but only his abhorrence of female society.

No point stating the obvious.

*****

Butch excused himself, and peeled off his skin-tight Iron-Maiden T. As if he'd mind, seeing Butch topless.

Johnny caught the fried onion reek of stale boy-pits. There was a little bush of grey hair around each nipple, besides the tuft he was used to seeing between the lapels of his open-necked slightly butch-looking Polo © shirt. The nipples were large, and erect. His gut jutted out like he said, though Johnny didn't believe his explanation, that he had unnaturally large lungs from cycling, which pushed his gut out.

Since Maypole City he'd become a dirty Nazi Kraut. He called himself a dog, a hound. He pronounced it hund, to Johnny's ears....

So on top of everything else, he was rude to animals....

He insisted he was through with all that, New Berlin, week-long operas, torch-lit marches, Horst Wessel, and the Little Corporal shooting himself in the Reichchancellory while biting a poison phial....

Johnny knew better. He was a Hun!

He showed Johnny pictures of his adopted hometown. New Berlin. Hard-working lifestyle and honest, Germanic values. There were beer cellars. He indicated one beside a florist's, where his father had a fatal heart attack after the tractor factory failed....

So Kraut, Johnny had to laugh. When it wasn't lawn mowers, it was tanks....

He was my age, Butch sighed.

How promising, Johnny sneered. He regarded the few chest hairs that strayed over his heart, Butch clutching the spot. Imagining Butch topless, riding a lawn mower. Then a tank, toppling off the turret. Shot through the heart!

Butch had a picture of a hill in the Maypole City Cemetery, eroded by the river that flowed sluggish and brown beside it, an open sewer.

Seated beside him, he indicated the heavy black lettering.

Look, they were goose-stepping up the hill.

Johnny moved closer, to get a better view.

He saw it was furry and slightly swollen, like it was pregnant.

It's alive....

His gut, he meant.

Johnny knew, it was from stout. He'd sit up there in his Thing Street flat over Praetorius's Social Entrepreneur bike shop, swilling thick dark suds all afternoon, naked and hard as your pinky watching old Merckx movies....

Not Groucho, Eddie....

The Six-Day Bicycle Race....

There wasn't much bush on his abdomen, just a light sprinkling of more grey hairs like the ones between his tits, around his nipples. Johnny touched it once, his gut that is, making him wince. He pleaded....

Eddie Merckx was not a faggot!

Sure, but before the night was old he was stripping off his socks to show Johnny his crazy ankle, where he'd scraped it. Then his Iron Maiden T-shirt, to show him where his chest muscles had shrunk, immediately after the accident.

After a lifetime in business, he was finally getting buff and cut, when somebody mutilated him....

Johnny saw the little line on his right breast, where they'd inserted a drain for his collapsed lung. It went straight to the nipple. Butch pretended to be busy, reading the liner notes to an old vinyl record he was cuing on the Godwill stereo, while Johnny traced the scar, with a wet fore-finger....

He licked it after. Salty!

Butch shivered again, pretended to be angry when the liner notes wouldn't glide into their sheath. Johnny hoped he was better with a safe.

Does anyone remember liner notes, Johnny queried. He could see he was hard, the fag.

He got Mitzi, to get rid of the hard.

Butch met her waiting for his shrink at the misnamed Community Mental Health Casino, a far-out satellite of Thing Street. The locos called it Fort Medz, aptly considering it belonged to the Ministry of Asylums, Lotteries and Casinos.

Butch must have been drunk. She had Medusa hair, anorexic tits like empty saddle-bags.

Afterwards, at Mitzi's, stripped to the waste to show all comers how his tits collapsed after the accident, lifting brew after brew, he raved over and over.

Wasn't she beautiful??? He flashed her picture, copied off her much-abused TITZ Card.

She looked stoned, but he drew their attention to that hair! That bod! Those TITS!!!

His own were bigger, bouncier. For confirmation, several regulars endeavored to cop a feel, but by then Butch was displaying his pedal technique, performing the leg show as it were, before a select mob. He didn't even bother to brush away their hands, he was so used to it. Besides, he rather liked it....

Everyone knew she was a dog-fuck. Except Butch that is.

With orange hair! Strutting down Thing Street, like she owned it.

Even the hair belonged to somebody else....

*****

Deane and Johnny discussed sex over supper one evening, before Christmas.

Actually, they discussed masturbation.

Being queer and an outsider so far as heterosexual arrangements were concerned, it surprised him that straight married men didn't have passionate sex every night, except possibly with themselves.

Deane laughed. He was separated. He explained that for the first six months there was plenty of sex, but it didn't make the Top Ten List of Reasons for Staying Married. Johnny said it looked like a legal arrangement. Deane agreed.

Balzac would have laughed.

*****

Deane wiped his forehead with a brown paper towel from the dispenser. He folded the paper towel and stuck it to his forehead, with the sweat of his brow. He wore it like a visor. Johnny said he looked so sexy, like that.

The dispenser was the one that, unable to think of anything useful to do one evening, Bozo had nailed to one of the cupboard doors. It stuck out so far they couldn't use the counter beneath it. When one opened the cupboard it was attached to, it hit one in the head. Fortunately it wouldn't open more than half way. The next cupboard wouldn't open more than halfway either, without bumping into it.

Without adding anything to the convenience and efficiency of their kitchen, Bozo had removed a quarter of their cupboard space and a third of their counter-top.

Bozo also renovated the parlor. He couldn't reach the videos that were stored in the tall bookshelves to the right of the fake fireplace. So he wrecked the fireplace too, by bolting a cheap bookshelf to the right end of the mantle. It wasn't as high as the original shelf, and the tapes were out of the way (''where they belonged'').

It wasn't even symmetrical. The mantle was solid mahogany. Above it hung a large expensive mirror. Bozo had characteristically desecrated the only nice things in the house. With an arborite bookshelf.

Didn't they have a maintenance man? How was Gladys going to fix her hair, if she couldn't even see her reflection? Bozo had really screwed up.

Deane despised Bozo for his delusional business schemes, his meanness, his hypocrisy, his incompetence at work, his unhappy personal life. A partial list....

Thing Street Asylum

Bozo ran a mail-order business for Lesbians. Not like the Marbles in the movie. He didn't kidnap young hookers, have the geek impregnate them and sell the product to Lesbian couples. He did have a whole catalog devoted to sex toys made out of plastic that glowed in the dark. He never made any money.

He knew that the landlord and his mother were Catholics. He thought religious things were kinky, so he asked Johnny to give them a copy of his catalog. He showed it to them, apologetically. Johnny knew they'd be insulted. They were.

Bozo also sold computers. He said his company could assemble anything the consumer/survivor could possibly desire. Like Dell. He didn't know the difference between a Pentium IV and a Commodore 64. He said he could make Johnny a Pentium for a few hundred bucks. Johnny didn't tell him but he told the landlord. He'd just bought one from J. Zeus Murphy's Zombie Crypt Store for five.

The market was flooded. I.B.M. wanted out of the business. He knew a competent programmer who couldn't get work. The manager said if he explained that to Bozo it wouldn't make any difference. He wouldn't get it.

Bozo was a moral idiot. His morality came straight from Jerry Springer. The only forum where he was certain to see worse idiots than himself.

He sincerely believed that one day he'd strike it rich. He squandered a fortune on lottery tickets.

He was more likely to get rich that way than through his business ventures. He was even more likely to get struck by lightning.

Nonetheless he was convinced that one day he'd return as a great entertainer to the little town he came from. He'd have an estate, money, and his name in lights.

Deane said he was a clown.

*****

One evening Johnny caught Frederick sobbing in the dining room, alone at one of the long white plastic tables that they cleaned with the bleach rag after every meal. There was always one in the bucket of bleach on top of the tenants' fridge.

Johnny twisted the bleach rag over the bucket and started to wipe Frederick's table. It didn't need it. He'd already wiped it once when he cleaned up right after supper.

It was just a way to break the ice, and get him to raise his head. The bleach stank, like burnt skin. He burned himself with it once, cleaning the back stairs with his bare hands.

It worked. Frederick slowly sat up. Johnny asked, What was the matter?

He said, It was Laura. She loved Louis. She was throwing him aside for Louis, a figment of his imagination.

When Johnny suggested that it didn't matter, Louis was a bum, Laura could have him if that was what she wanted, Frederick (not Fred) immediately recovered.

Being delusional was unhappy, if delusions were unfaithful. What if they were self-destructive?

When Frederick got up to go upstairs, Julia was mopping the floor. She hadn't put up her sign, because (as usual) Bozo had hidden it. Frederick (not Fred) marched toward the stairs, thinking about Louis, and slipped. Johnny heard his broad back flop against the floor, like a flour sack. He bent down. At least Fred hadn't hit his head.

He saw Johnny, and started to moan. Johnny offered to help him get up, but he said he didn't want to look. He knew there was blood all over. He was probably brain-damaged. Johnny said he didn't think so, but they could discuss it in the lounge. He'd give him a cigarette.

F-f-free? Fred felt better already.

*****

Johnny was writing about Deane writing about him writing about Deane, etc.

Johnny was thinking about Deane thinking about Johnny thinking about Deane's foot.

Its latest incarnations.

White socks, in sneakers. Black hose, in boots.

Deane striding in with his knapsack. His trousers hemmed halfway up strong calves covered with brown hair. Saying he wanted to take a look, after passing by so many times. Johnny getting a first impression of his broad shoulders from his T-shirt. More brown hairs growing over the collar. The golden necklace....

Asking about loco history, Johnny's loony-bin book.

Xeroxed copies, on Trixie's battered buffet.

Deane picked one up. He didn't vomit. He seemed interested. He didn't immediately lose interest either, but sat down with it on a fanback that Romeo'd sold to Praetorius for 7,000 dollars. He removed a pair of wire-rimmed glasses from his knapsack, and started to read.

Johnny never saw that happen before....

The second time he came in, take a peak. Not at Johnny's book, which would have been too much. He already had his own copy, which Johnny had duly autographed and dedicated TO DEANE.

By then it was fall. He wore jeans and a jacket. Glasses, too. Johnny didn't recognize him in his autumnal back-to-school drag....

So he automatically started autographing a second copy of his book for him. Your name, son?

Deane, he started to say, then switched to David. So he could get a free copy. Maybe he scalped them.

Then at the door Deane turned around and asked Johnny if he ever got a sense of DEJA VU. As if it had all happened before....

Maybe Deane would come in a different incarnation every night, till Pioneers of Alienism became a best-seller.

Each time, wearing a different pair of shoes....

Such a nice, young man!

He could open a shoe-store....

*****

Every day he did something for his book. For Pioneers of Alienation and 50s Sci-Fi at Thing Street Asylum.

Yesterday he photocopied some information on Amazon, about Thing Street and himself. When he got home he realized that he'd omitted the word LIVED from his biography. So that it read I HAVE MANYT YEARS on Thing Street in Porkdale.

It didn't make sense. Or did it? Only the years had him. Like a prison. They were his sentence.

This morning he delivered photocopies to various Thing Street cafes and bars. Even to the Laundromat.

He slipped them through mail chutes, deposited them on tables, tacked them to bulletin boards.

He preferred mail chutes. They were more anonymous.

Some of the excerpts offered a dark view of the neighborhood. Really? What else was there? Unless you were on Poemfortheday.....

He wondered what the stout lady at the psychopharm would say. She was on it!

He walked all the way up to the crummy internet cafe on Spoor Street. A Persian was on cash. He rented Johnny a machine in the back, where the gamers lurked. A gang entered just as he was booting up, and wanted him to move so they could take over.

One of them asked if he was going to be there for a long time.

A few weeks, he said. How long are YOU here for?

A few weeks, he said.

He wanted to print off excerpts of his book, to dispense in Porkdale. The antidote for Poemfortheday....

He saw himself squatting on the curb with dosettes full of copies of his tome, but he didn't see himself offering them to passersby for free examination. It wasn't hygienic. They'd walk off with his whole stash. He'd seen it happen to him, before....

To his book....

When he rose to pay the Persian for his copies, one of the gamers got ready to make a move on Johnny's computer. I'm printing! Sorry, he explained.

The printer didn't work. The Persian offered him a flash drive, so he could make copies from the master computer. That didn't work either. Finally, he just switched computers.

In the old Psycho-Pharm on Thing Street he passed the stocky lady who'd worked behind the cash as long as he could remember.

Looking ahead out the door, he noted the slate colour of the clouds, deepened by the peculiar atmosphere of Porkdale. The smoky garments, unwashed sweaty bodies, foetid exhalations, rotten teeth and bad breath affected the light....

Porkdale grey, he said.

She objected, she'd lived in Parkdale her whole life, and she loved it. Here, have some Poemfortheday....

She handed him a bright little scripture-card, the one with the cunning logo of P/Bigge Shitte ALLWOOD's POETRY INSTITUTE....

He wondered what that had to do with it. Then again, maybe that was why she didn't notice.

*****

He'd went to Worthless World, where he found DVDs of DOWNFALL and A HARD DAY'S NIGHT, the antipodes of his mental life.....

Also, CDs of Dinah Washington's ROULETTE material, the soundtrack of TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE....

The cashier offered Johnny his SENIOR'S DISCOUNT, then looking at Johnny's vacant middle-aged shit face, he immediately thought better of it but it was TOO LATE.

He knew Johnny wouldn't leave, worse wouldn't even pay, till he got his DISCOUNT.

So how old are you, anyway? he asked, trying to suppress a giggle while making change.

Sixy-six, Johnny lied. He was really a sprightly 57.

Good maintenance, the cashier observed.

Clean living, Johnny said.

He was haunted by a late 19th-century picture of Niagara Falls he'd seen in a shopping cart at the Bluecoats on Spoor. It was three feet wide and one foot high, to accommodate the principal cataracts. It had suffered water damage. It hadn't been priced yet.

A Slavic woman in the blue smock of the Bluecoats said the manager had wanted to price it herself, but had called in sick today.

Johnny asked if someone else could price it.

She said maybe Thelma. She went to find Thelma, in the basement. Johnny followed her to the basement door, carrying THE FALLS....

Thelma in turn wanted to ask a third party. This was the same Portuguese lady who'd refused to give him a package deal on Toscanini's recording of Falstaff. She merely repeated what the first woman had said. The manager wanted to price Niagara Falls herself, and she wasn't there. She took the Falls into the back room, for safety.

This time Johnny accepted the situation more graciouslay, but on his way out the door a Slavic woman in the blue smock of the Bluecoats stopped him. The manager had just phoned in, and she'd had the presence to ask her how much she wanted.... For THE FALLS!

Fifty bucks!

For Niagara Falls....

Where it all began....

Always plenty of ass....

*****

Every day he did something for PIONEERS OF ALIENATION. The antidote for Poemfortheday.

Today he decided to give a copy to the Book Lady who worked for the Bluecoats. He met her working late down the street. He specified that it wasn't a donation; it was for her. He would even dedicate it to her, on the cover.

How did she want the dedication to go, he asked with book in hand, pencil poised.

O, just say to me, for my work on Thing Street.

How about, to a PIONEER, he suggested.

From another, she added....

*****

The good thing about getting old was canlitters dying ahead of him. Tiffany Finelay, Rube Goldberg.

He didn't mourn them, bullies with their fat pensions and contracts and gentrified outhouses on the Riviera....

Sic transit, PIONEERS!

*****

P/Bigge Shitte's favorite bookstore was a make-work project for boomers, occupational therapy for terminal cases.

She imagined it. If the store had been a man it would have smoked a pipe and worn a tweedy jacket with patches on the sleeves.

Pioneers of Alienation

It was already adequately personified by the proprietor, who didn't have patches on his elbows but made up for it by appearing on Thing Street every morning sporting what appeared to be a well-groomed twat growing on his face.

They took two copies of Pioneers of Alienation on consignment. He remembered dealing with the propietor's daughter and her aunt. The daughter was nice enough, she just didn't know anything about books.

Taking its portmanteau title entirely too literally, and totally missing the pun about alienism (early psychiatry), she put Pioneers of Alienation in the Sci-Fi Section....

The aunt was a pain in the ass, insisting on drawing up a full page contract, then muffing it by giving them only a week to sell the books, and afterwards calling Johnny back into the store to initial the revisions.

All this looked officious, and fake, following their subsequent and totally inaction after the books actually sold. They made no effort to contact him, when they owed him money.

Johnny was prepared to overlook it, thinking they'd remember having scalped him and, when he offered them the chance to buy a better-bound revision of Pioneers, at least not be mean.

No such luck, perhaps because it was the aunt again.

She remembered, but only partially.

She remembered the book with the spaceship on the cover, but forgot the part about not paying him. She obviously wanted to buy it, but not to pay for it - consignment again. Johnny said no, he would sell it at cost but not give it away for free.

She wondered if she'd mind talking to her brother.

He said he would, and the aunt cheerfully greeted the next person in line, a chit looking for the latest swill by P/Bigge Shitte Allwood.

*****

It was hard for him to do the equivalent of cold calls, to walk into some establishment that he'd never patronized himself', and offer them a copy of Pioneers - ask them to buy it in other words, albeit at cost. He felt guilty, understandably considering he never bought a book anywhere except from The Bluecoats, where it was a generic price: 99 cents for paperbacks to 3.99 for hardcovers - and half of that on sale days. It was amazing, the books he got cheap - especially in Porkdale, where there was clearly an interest in favor of Mental Hell subjects from its being the catchment area of the old Asylum down the street. He got a copy of the very expensive DSM for a few dollars, and the Oxford edition of Freud's book about dreams.

It was also hard now that he was getting old. It was hard when you were nearly 60 to just walk in somewhere, an unknown -- and offer some stranger a copy of your life.

Still, he had to. At least he did it....

Today he got lucky. He went into a store right across the street from his welfare hotel, where they sold everything from coffee to magazines.

There was now a young, bearded man on cash. He seemed a bit cagey when Johnny asked to speak to the proprietor about a book, but he noticed a tall woman with white hair who looked like her standing in the back of the store. He nodded at the young man, and approached her directly. She was pleasant and direct. She looked at the book, was interested, didn't have any money, but if he'd come back on Friday she'd buy two copies. Of course, he'd be glad to come back on Friday - especially to sell not one but two copies of Pioneers....

So that was that. Sometimes luck was with him....

He'd walk north on Lansdowne, a crummy street lined with cheap rooming houses with junkies smoking up on the crumbling porches. There was an overpass, then the giant No Frillies behind an art deco facade, all that remained of what had been the food terminal for western Toronto for decades.

He'd keep walking, because he had other stops to make, and didn't want to burden himself with groceries that he could more easily pick up on the way back. He was outward bound....

He'd continue past the enormous Catholic high school, that reminded him of a high security military installation. It was three stories high, with bright red brick walls and a sloping black metal roof. Its slanted windows obviously didn't open. Everything about it seemed on an angle, like it was cringing and trying to hide.

He 'd go to the bank at Lansdowne and Spoor, and withdraw the rest if his monthly cheque from the ATM.

He'd then walk a short block east to Worthless World, which he liked a lot less now that he always saw the same people there, and they looked like crooks. The tall curly-haired dark-complexioned one, evidently the ring-leader, would offer him things he didn't want like he was being generous.

The Book Lady was there less often, like she'd finally had her long awaited relapse and been re-admitted. The Teacher Woman wasn't there at all, like she'd died. Johnny speculated that she'd got too close to one of the crooks who'd offed her and plundered her condo, leaving her old parrot to starve until the cops broke in.

From Worthless World he walked east on Spoor Street to another Bluecoats store. He passed the Paradise strip club on the corner, right beside a store-front church with the cheap facade of a fake brick and stucco steeple with a big painted-on cross. The Marquis said FREE MEAL WEDNESDAY 6 P.M. The strip club was actually more tasteful.

Thing Street Asylum

Johnny wondered if worshippers ever went into the strip club by mistake, and stayed. He hoped they enjoyed the show.

He passed another strip club, the Lancaster House, a few blocks east, with the ridiculous addition, like a subtitle under the name, GENTLEMAN'S CLUB. He remembered a student of his, who had wound up dancing there. Stripping, really.

He proceeded, past a vintage clothing shop and several sandwich shops. He turned south on a side street, to go to the Bufferinn Mall. There was a beer store at the entrance. He entered and walked past the young bearded men on cash, where there always seemed to be the same down-and-outers sorting cans and bottles with fingerless gloves, into the main area of the store. It was really just an enormous walk-in fridge full of beer - an alky's dream.

The entrance to the Buffer Inn Mall was a double series of heavy glass and steel doors. Between them were banks of payphones manned by raffish looking black men. Johnny assumed they were pimps, by they were probably just New Dadanians talking to Probation Officers.

It was a primary pee stop because of its magnificent washroom, stainless steel outside for spotlessness, green tile inside for that private feeling so conducive to urination. Unfortunately it was frequented by a lot of purblind old farts, so the tiles in front of the urinals were usually slippery-wet with sloppily sprayed urine. They reminded him of the banks of phones on the way in.

Johnny was afraid he'd contaminate his groceries if he put them in a puddle on the floor, or some senile dement would pee on them. He had to squeeze them under his arm since he needed two hands just to do his business. Luckily today he had everything in a cheap cloth shopping bag that he slung over his shoulder. Just the thing.

At Walmart there were Christmas candies and ornaments. They'd just marked down the Halloween stuff.

Oboy!

He checked out the frozen foods in a long line of freezers against the far wall, but pizzas and frozen dinners weren't on sale. They were all he ever bought, and only if they were on sale.

There were long line-ups at the cash. He hated waiting while the robotic voice directed people ahead of him to available cashiers. He wondered who made the recordings. Did it pay?

People thought Walmart was evil. He found it merely depressing.

Then he noticed. The Walmart Greeter had just got in a fresh supply of Poemfortheday!

Boyoboy!

P/Bigge Shitte ALLWOOD rigged Dadanian culture. On social media networks the book reviewers were androids she'd implanted and controlled with her new kind of TRANSFORMING meds called Poemfortheday.

They dispensed it in tweets and blogs, less painful than a needle in the ass. All the IRONY PEOPLE were fatally hooked. On their profiles they looked young and smiling, but they were really wild-eyed and haggard awaiting the next fix of Poemfortheday.

When Vixen Foxy WEASEL-THEATRE expressed even a PASSING INTEREST in anything other than the latest SHITTE, say PIONEERS OF ALIENATION by JOHNNY BOY (than whom no one was more outré) P/Bigge Shitte Allwood threatened to withhold her Poemfortheday.

Vixen begged for it, cried for it. Without it she couldn't compose. She LIVED FOR IT....

P/Bigge Shitte kept supplies of it in blister packs and dosettes piled high to the ceiling like meal trays in Thing Street psychofarms. Of course, all Thing Street was one big virtual psychofarm of which P/Bigge Shitte was the biggest psycho farmer of them all.

She and her husband Crackers resembled the iconic farm couple of American Gothic....

At least as Vixen Foxy saw it, it wasn't hay but great big bleedkng chunks of POEM FOR THE DAY....

Skewered on their pitchforks like marshmallows....

When she was jonesing....

She'd imagine P/Bigge herself grabbing one of the forks and shoving a mallow up hers like a plunger....

She infected the irony boys in every book joint on Spoor. Which no female had yet managed to do. They must have been saving themselves, just for her.

They were Allwood droids.

SHITTE-ITES!

Pioneers of Alienation

Droid monkey-boys, they swaggered Nazi-style, crisply goose-stepped between SHITTE-laden tables or scampered on all fours up to the Mezzanine with its palm-trees, their dicks danglingly insouciantly from carelessly unzippered flies....

There was a filthy table in the back, cluttered with dirty magazines and coconut shells like shattered skulls. The sign said Buyer's Table but Johnny didn't see any buyers around. Just a Japanese woman in a grey raincoat holding a bag of dvds, sad and shabby-looking. She'd been waiting a long time, to see a monkey boy.

It took all his self-control, not to start chattering and scolding as he approached the monkey boy on cash. He was bespectacled, docile but sullen. Johhny'd dealt with him before. He knew he'd turned bitter, after selling off his entire Fritz Lang collection. He'd attempted to commiserate with him, and been rebuffed.

The sign says BUYER'S DESK, but I don't see any buyer. Johnny whined.

He'll be there when he gets around to it. The Monkey Boy on Cash growled.

Johnny returned to the dirty table to wait with the depressing Japanese woman. Eventually The Monkey Boy Buyer appeared, ambling upright and scratching himself. Johnny tried to look inconspicuous while Monkey Boy dickered with the woman. He rejected all her DVDs outright, but offered her twenty loonies for her CDs. She took the 20 and shuffled off.

Monkey Boy noncolantly grabbed a fruit from the clump that overhung the railing and began to peal.

I have something to show you too, said Johnny. Brandishing his massive tome.

Monkey Boy bared yellow fangs. He had a nasty bite, but it was his saliva that killed you.

He said they weren't interested in BIG books. Actually they weren't interested in books at all. Just selling. Especially whatever popped out of P/Bigge Shitte Allwood's Easy Bake. Now there was a bit of all right. Hot cakes. Bite-sized tweetable morsels. Clients read one in a couple of minutes with their meds.

Pfizer and the POETRY INSTITUTE....

Before anybody knew, they were back for ANOTHER FIX and ANOTHER ONE....

Begged for it, cried for it....

Allwood's latest. Full of it. Liberally laced with it. Poemfortheday.

It was in his banana. They fertilized trees with it. Allwood loved trees, next to her own shit.

Monkey Boy was a SHITTE-ITE.

Johnny noticed the shelf beside him. Full of Crazy Jane Jacobs. Her dialogues with flabby old bull-dykes in Thing Street latté joints. Was that irony?

God shat on him, using Jane Jacobs for shit.

Even his (so-called) care-givers were on it....

Especially!

*****

Trixie, in enormous cowboy boots? DISGUSTING.

She entered Johnny's store. She looked sorry, as she politely offered Johnny her hand. They shook. I wanted to apologize to you for coming on to you like I did yesterday. I was really gross. I'm sorry!

I promise I'll be good this time. And thank you so much for the picture. Praetorius really liked it. Johnny supposed her pimp did too. Yesterday she said it was for her birthday.

Then a dealer arrived. They were talking in the back of the store. He looked toward the front and noticed Trixie at the display case. A bad sign! He looked again and she was passing out the door.

A few moments later a Pakistani guy entered the store and told him that he had seen some whore running down the street with one of Johnny's prize 7/11 paintings.

Trixie staggered under the burden of an enormous nude Nubian painted on black velvet: 70s afro, bright blue nipples, silver toe-nails. Johnny hotly pursued them both.

Her spirits flagged in prospect of certain capture. Trixie collapsed onto a bench at the corner of Best Lodge and Thing.

Behind her, surrounded by a quaint wrought iron fence, smoldered a beautiful Community Parkette, celebrating the PIONEER whose plumbing company had installed every toilet on Thing Street.

The Nubian's nipples pointed at Trixie. Okay, she sighed, You caught me. She did not attempt to flee. She did not even get up.

Don't come into my store again ever! Johnny commanded. He grabbed the nude by its fake carving. HIS!

It bore a price tag, with a legend: $95 Just arrived from the U.S.A. Very 70s!

As he carried Mona Lisa down Thing Street, he heard Trixie taunting behind him: Don't you ever ever....

Thing Street Asylum

*****

Johnny was reading a book on podiatry....

When he came to the statement that No part of your body is more closely related to your comfort than your feet, he wanted to shout Amen!

Deane's foot was the seat of pleasure.

Deane had no pleasure in anything, if his foot was displeased. And no one had any pleasure in Deane, who did not also have pleasure in his Deane's foot. Everyone who loved Deane, loved his foot most of all.

Johnny read on. About how almost no one reached adulthood without experiencing some type of foot trouble.

Deane's foot was better-built than a Roman arch.... More architecturally perfect than the Pantheon.... Its small bones joined by ligaments.... The Arch of Triumph extending from heel to ball, a smaller but no less perfect arch intersecting.... Making Deane's step springy.... His foot flexible and strong....

*****

E.M. Forester....
Man's man....
Wrote Passage to India etc., and an infamous gay tract called Maurice.
He made only connect his motto, meaning.....
Fucking up the ass facilitated global understanding....
Between the toes was nuclear deterrence....
Forester belonged to that extraordinarily macho mob, Bloomsbury.....
His love of many years was a cop....
He found his only connection with a rough and tough son of the workers, who never made it to Eton and thought hazing was some kind of flatulence, wonderfully stimulating and refreshing....
If we were pals, our relationship would consist of a strong affectionate connection....
I mean....
Fucking up the ass....
I believe human affairs are subject to chance (tricks) and fate (the special buns we happened to be kissing before we were born, and worshiped, ever after)....
I imagine the atmosphere at that hi-tech software company in Cowgary....
Competition....
Rivalry....
Back-stabbing....
The testosterone condenses on the ceiling, drips into the araucaria....
The hibiscus gets a hard-on....
Everybody keeps a cattle-prod in his drawers, for security....
So what if you're archaic, a silly OLD WOMAN....
It's from living alone, in an empty bungalow, on an empty prairie, in the middle of Dadania....
A stump-lot, from the sky, even from the ground....
I see Deane in love with virtue and wisdom, a philosopher, a SOD....
I see us together, long-time companions, ass-hole buddies....
Clyde Tyson....
J. Edgar Hoover....
Maybe you should consider renting a room to a young hustler....
An English Major from Cowgary U., working his way through D.H. Lawrence....

Marx had a saying....
Men make history, but not exactly as they like....
He should have said....
Men make men....

*****

The bag lady....
25 cent woman....
Looked for something to buy, as cheap as herself.....
Put a dollar item, on hold....
Some clients, just liked to shop....

She brought Johnny some plastic bags, because she knew how hard up he was himself, for the amenities....
Sometimes she brought him just one bag, which he immediately returned to her with her purchase....
Strange ritual....
Once, Romeo told her to look at the floor.
She asked, Why?
YOU are standing on THE LUCKY SPOT, he announced, and handed her a bright, pink 50 dollar bill.
She thanked him, but she looked suspicious. Johnny knew she needed the money, but taking it destroyed the pretense of being a normal customer, normal....
She appeared to be in her 80s; she wore a bright long dress, bonnet, with lappets....
Like, Susquehannah Mooday....
She dropped in, on the way to her worker, almost every day. Her worker gave her pin money, to go shopping....

*****

Romeo thought tall, dapper Sharpshanks had aids. Johnny often saw him around Thing Street. In the morning he usually squatted in front of the dollar store and sipped coffeeslime. He always wore tight-fitting pants a little short and a wide-brimmed beige felt hat or a hockey helmet.
He gave Johnny 20 dollars for an old G.E. portable stereo record player that Johnny wanted 25 dollars for. Johnny had written the price with a blue felt-tipped pen on an orange star-burst sign and taped it to the plastic cabinet.
It was really only worth 5 dollars; Johnny let him have it, for 20....

*****

Babyface started macramé in 1970. Macramé saved his life.
He went every day. The landlady woke him at the crack of dawn. There were only two bathrooms and somebody was always pissing or puking in the sink.
Breakfast was served at seven-thirty and Macramé started at eight-thirty sharp in the quaint little old 19-century Chronics' Cottage on the north-west corner of the beautifully landscaped psychotropic gardens.....
He wanted to make an early start so he wouldn't miss a second of his favorite thing.... Beautiful macramé....
One of the instructors in Macramé was Miss Hemp, a wonderful person. And there was an unusually well set-up man with a military bearing who wore a navy blazer and gray slacks. Babyface didn't know what kind of nursing training he'd had but he was a mean man with a wet-pack and a needle.... Usually Largactil.... He knew how to make the sweetest sailor's knots you ever saw.... He learned how to tie them in the Great War.... He was a wonderful person....
At nine o'clock they did Yoga with Swami Krishna. At nine-thirty they had rap sessions. Between two and three in the afternoon they'd have men's and women's group-therapy.....
On the ground floor there was a kitchen, a living room, and a dining room. At the top of the stairs was Dr. Eel's office. It was a scary place....
The nurses reported every word you said to him, so Eel already knew all about him.
If you dissed somebody's macramé, Professor Eel knew....

He wasn't exactly the Camp Commandant but he had an iron fist. Only once did Babyface actually catch him in the act of seig heiling a colleague.
So maybe shrinks weren't exactly nice guys, what with eugenics and concerns about race suicide and all that, but they had so many demands on their time....

*****

Richard Dix saluted Johnny in the Coffeeslime. He wanted to borrow 10 dollars.

*****

Porko heard a loud crash of spurs and a cap gun going off and cautiously looked out the Thing Street door as Osama strode around the corner, laughing, whistling and singing like a Woolworth's greeter on smack.
I got him, he shouted.
At the Beastly entrance he discovered Cowboy flat on his face, unconscious, bleeding slightly from his head wound. His stetson was on the ground beside him, imprinted with the edge of the Beastly door where Osama had slammed it in his face. He felt Cowboy's wrist. He was alive.

Thing Street Asylum

He dropped his wrist and picked up the hat, tenderly brushing off the dust and grease of Beastly Ave. Cowboy's Stetson had saved his live again. Then he called 911 for an ambulance, but as far as he was concerned, there wasn't any need to hurry.

*****

Krakpotkin liked to accompany Porko on his grand rounds. Porko always knew when Krakpotkin was attracted to a client, because he'd blush. Then Krakpotkin took it upon himself to do Grand Rounds without him.

Krakpotkin would convince himself. Some syphilitic old fool was a Mafia Don. He'd ask him for (free) financial advice, principally how to avoid paying income tax. His fake Don would assure him. His money was safe in an RRSP. Krakpotkin leave left it there, ignoring the government's increasingly importunate duns. Finally Alapaloozah would lose ALL PATIENCE, and order his SATRAP to SEIZE the LOOT.

Johnny would ask him to kindly indicate this alleged Mafia Man, next time they met on Thing Street. Krakpotkin would oblige, and a few days later point to Fellini.

Fellini was a CROOK!

Porko warned Krakpotkin not to meddle with a particular black man who frequented THE DROP INN, whom even Fellini wouldn't cheat. He cut everyone's meds, except his. For him, he exercised strict quality control.

Krakpotkin said, he could handle him. As long as he wasn't a DOCTOR....

Krakpotkin thought he was tough, but he was afraid of doctors. He was slowly haemorhaging from every orifice, but the idea of giving enough blood for a test made him ill. He didn't even want to get a needle.

Porko tried to reassure him. Blood tests were painless. They could even apply a loco anaesthetic to his arm, so he wouldn't feel anything. Krakpotkin insisted. He didn't have to FEEL anything.

It wasn't FEELING that bothered him, it was THINKING....

Then Krakpotkin would notice BUTCH, impersonating a laid-off IT worker leaving his apartment in the middle of the day. He'd introduce himself in the hall, as Porko's assistant. He'd say he'd seen him skulking around a lot, lately. Butch would explain. He'd been laid off at M.F.I. (twenty years ago). He just wanted to get some exercise, before Mitzi got back from the hair-dresser.

Krakpotkin would start lecturing, like he thought he was WITH A CLIENT. He hoped it wasn't Butch's intention to lie around all day, watching Lance Armstrong movies, while Mitzi worked. Citizen Hearse didn't want tenants to stay home all day, typing on the computer, turning on the lights, wasting Hydro. That's what his DROP INNS were for. Butch could type and watch T.V. all day in his loco DROP INN, and Hearse-Ferrari would bill The City.

Then Krakpotkin demanded Mitzi's work number. He said Butch had to give it to him, because he was Assistant Super. He wanted to talk to her, about life. Like her Personal Manager.

Krakpotkin thought he was Assistant Super, but that was a Popular Delusion of Crowds at Emile Durkheim House. Everyone thought he was Assistant Super and deserved to be Super, although nobody could do the job except Porko. He could read.

Whenever one of these losers appeared before the Tribunal, for threatening to burn Emile Durkheim House to the Ground, or uttering Death Threats against the Management God and Czar, his first counter-complaint was having been cheated of the Superintendent's job by Hearse-Ferrari's machinations. Then he'd weep and introduce all sorts of spurious exhibits, proving his incapacity for anything but Asylum Greeter.

*****

Like most of Workman's patients, the paretic has his special place in the physical arrangements of the asylum.[40] He becomes the greeter of the institution as, in his extroversion, he publicly welcomes visiting journalists, whom Workman characterizes, incidentally, as second class novelists, and newspaper twaddlers (report for 1859, 19); he should have known, having been one himself.

Paresis becomes the most public form of madness, as journalists make him the hero of their insane caricatures (19). However, Workman cannot forebear reminding us, visitors are astonished to learn that their greeter will soon be afflicted with the most abject bodily and mental prostration (20).

*****

[40] Dr. Joseph Workman, 'On paresis,' The Canada Lancet 10.11 (1878), 357-59; 11.1, 1-5.

Pioneers of Alienation

Porko knocked at Johnny's door. He said he should see Number 8. It was like a back-woods cabin up north. The walls hadn't been painted in so long that they weren't any color you could recognize or easily define, let alone buy in a paint store. The color of 20 years' accumulation of smog, cigarette smoke, cooking fumes, and cat-box vapor. They were hairy with mold, and there were thick cobwebs in all the corners, with fat greasy spiders.

Speaking of which, Porko's floozy had already been inside. The tenant who'd lived there for 20 years till just a few minutes ago knocked at her door with two suitcases beside her and handed her the keys. That was all, after 20 years. Trixie Zane told Porko, as soon as he got back from the other site.

They were the first to enter after it was abandoned, like jungle explorers entering a ruined Mayan city. They were hit by the atmosphere. Trixie Zane asked if he thought he should open a window. He laughed, and she immediately saw why. The windows were already open, a soiled fan was pumping the air over their heads, and it still stank.

Trixie Zane said she'd sue the bitch, if she had anything to do with it. Johnny said by the look of things she didn't have enough assets to make it worthwhile. Trixie Zane conceded the point. Porko said if there was anything he wanted he should just take it. Trixie told him, everything except the phone. It was hers. Porko said Johnny wouldn't want the phone, or anything else she wanted.

Johnny examined a crude wooden book shelf that he thought he could use. He found a book about things named Jones. It was a prefab “family tree” that someone had purchased through the mail. Johnny asked if that was Cowboy's last name. He was surprised the old lady left something about her husband and his things. Porko said not if you considered that she'd shared with her husband's native girldfriend for as long as anyone could remember.

Their relationship was peculiar. She seemed to be on good terms with the native woman. Porko said it was a good way never to have to consummate her marriage. Johnny said he supposed it was. Porko said the more he learned about things the stranger they seemed. It was a good job for learning about things.

Always the litterateur, Johnny thought of Dostoevsky asking a friend circa 1880 if it was normal not to snitch on the anarchists threatening to blow up the regime he was devoted to. He knew so much about psychology, from first-hand, personal experience, that he didn't know what normal was.

Jackie was supposed to meet Porko at 9:30 P.M. in Number 1, so Porko and Johnny didn't go to the electronics store after dinner at their favorite Chinese restaurant on Vagina Rd. Porko wanted to exchange the headphones for his XM radio. They'd broken during the warranty period. When they got back to Emile Durkheim House, 9:30 arrived, but no Jackie. Trixie descended the dark-varnished stairs in her bathrobe. Porko’d cut short their evening to spend it with her.

*****

Krakpotkin wanted Citizen Hearse to give him a discount on a BIG apartment. He messed up every place he ever stayed, and he never stayed anywhere longer than 7 months. Except JAIL and HOME. Seven months was his record....

It was a mystery why Citizen Hearse continued to rent to him. His motto was NO SECOND CHANCES! Krakpotkin got special treatment, and still screwed up. He must have been doing something especially serious.

Krakpotkin wanted Porko to rent him an eight hundred dollar unit for seven. Porko said he couldn't; the rent was fixed by Hearse-Ferrari himself. Krakpotkin demanded to speak to The Chief. Porko said, forget it! The Chief was a busy man. Krakpotkin insisted. The Chief wasn't too busy to see him. When Hearse-Ferrari appeared a few days later with a fresh supply of triple-ply institutional-use ass-wipes, Krakpotkin assumed. It was about him!

Krakpotkin cornered Hearse-Ferrari, in a water-closet. Johnny wondered what transpired with The Chief. Would he give MYSTERY MAN a break on an apartment. Emile Durkheim House secretly belonged to his partner, that mysterious Syndic, Charles Waldorf Handy. Johnny knew.

Citizen Hearse was Handy, whenever he wanted to turn someone down. It was his prerogative.

Johnny suspected. They were too equally crummy, not to be ONE.

Butch told Porko. Some client was running around Thing Street, impersonating his Assistant, harassing tenants and stalking their women, talking like a Doctor.

*****

Jackie said all the stuff in 8 was hers. When Porko told Citizen Hearse, he said she should come and take it. All! Right now....

Jackie never showed up for her things on Thursday, even though she'd called several times to say she'd found a truck and would be right over.

At 6 P.M. Porko called Johnny to ask him to give him a hand.

It was garbage night....

Johnny said sure. Then Porko asked him if he'd had anything to eat. Johnny said not really. So Porko suggested he come downstairs first, get some money, and pick up some pizza on the corner. Johnny said O.K.

Eating their pizza they thought about the stuff in 8. Johnny said the worst things to move were the old sofa, and the bed.

Porko groaned. He'd forgotten about that.

Johnny asked if it was a day-bed.

Porko said he thought so.

Too bad, Johnny said. They were the worst. So heavy! He noticed the headboard had fleurs de lis....

Johnny went upstairs. Porko went to ask Elmo if he wanted any of the plates and cutlery, for the drop-in. Crack whores ran off with them down Thing Street, then left them in parking lots. Johnny dropped off a box of garbage bags and went into his room to wait. Soon he heard voices. He joined Porko and Elmo. Elmo was happily rummaging through the kitchen cupboards for plates.

Johnny started to strip the couch. It was filthy, with large portions of the upholstery stripped off, exposing lumps of dirty yellow stuffing. He was relieved to discover that it wasn't a day-bed. There was no fold-away bed inside it, with a heavy metal frame. He pulled it away from the wall and raised one end. It wasn't as heavy as he'd feared. Porko took the other end, and they headed out the door and down the dark-varnished stairs. They passed Osama, on his way upstairs after work at the Money Mart.

They threw the sofa on top of a mountain of ice, what remained of the late big snowfall, on the sidewalk beside the drop-in on Thing Street. A lady who lived in an assisted housing unit upstairs, who'd assumed responsibility for putting out the garbage for the drop-in, as well as for her own and her neighbors' units, and who'd become preoccupied if not utterly obsessed about it, talked to Porko. She said she hoped the city would take such large items, and not fine him illegal dumping.

Porko assured her. They'd take it. They hadn't fined him yet.

They brought down the bed, an armchair, and a stereo console from the 60s. The bed was the worst. There were holes in the mattress. It was speckled with bed-bug shit.

He decided, he could use the headboard. It looked exactly like one that fell off Romeo's truck.

The Zsa Zsa Special!

Maybe, that was it....

Later, Osama pointed to a white spot on the wall, where a picture had hung for twenty years, till now. That, he said, was from cigarette smoke!

He marched around....

After it was fixed up, it would be the best unit in Emile Durkheim House! He said, rather coyly, he knew somebody who wanted it.

Johnny knew who he meant, right away. Porko didn't.

Who could have known about it, so soon?

He's standing before you, Johnny said.

O, Porko said. Forget it!

Getting his headboard back, was one thing, but that was a bit much.

Murdering Cowboy, then getting his apartment.

*****

Everyone jumped through
William Hart's lasso
And Olive Thomas
Broke her promise
Got a little boulder
Shook her wicked shoulder....

Dancing at that moving picture ball....

*****

An elderly showgirl in an ermine coat examined a copy of Johnny's asylum study, on Praetorius's fanback....

With the copy in one hand, she leafed through a bin of records with the other....

Regal! A Countessa!

She approached him with Pioneers of Alienation and Ted Wilson Sings Egyptian Ella....

Is everybody happy?....

She asked how much....

Johnny said a dollar for the record.

She said she'd take it. She knew something about jazz and she mentioned a famous Hogtown watering hole where there'd been good bebop in the 50s.

And, she said, she'd take a copy of Johnny's satire on psychiatrists....

She recognized some of them....

One especially....

Johnny gave her two copies....

The Widow Farout!

*****

A Milquetoast Broadcasting Company radio talk. Featuring no ordinary shrink. Professor C. Lamprini Eel. Former Head of the Dadanian Unintelligent Bureau, Executive Director of the Sharke Institute, Chair of Shrinkage at the Mighty U of Titz from 1980 to 1990, he was a Dadanian psychiatric front-man extraordinaire.

He edited that classic of shrink pharmacology, Adventures in Neurotoxicology (Hogtown: Marek Finkelburgher's U of Titz P, 1986), which advocated discretion in the use of banned substances (prescribe as much as you want, just don't tell anyone). He thought the greatest wisdom of the ages was encapsulated in A Method of Shrinking, (eds. Posh and Greenback), specifically in priceless bromides like, the average person calls a doctor because he feels sick and, there is strong evidence that economic factors make us depressed.

How, true....

Professor Eel's farts, groans, and other costive noises were regularly broadcast on the MBC. Johnny was nonetheless totally unprepared for the following stupidity:

Sigmund Freud is JESUS CHRIST, who suffered CRUCIFIXION for the world's QUACKS....

He went nuts over Freud's mythic power, the pure aesthetic beauty of mountains of shriveled-up shrunken heads. What a transformative impact on things' lives....

And Johnny thought Freud was a doctor. The silly....

Cecil told everyone a story, how long long ago, during a period of especially bitter strife between Freud and the Jungians, an ardent partisan of the latter, in his capacity as Maitre d' of Professor Eel's favorite restaurant, threw a tureen of soup in his face.

In revenge Professor Eel said the maitre d' wasn't fit to serve him any more. He could not be trusted around hot food....

He should be a client, because they never got any....

He had Culinary Character Disorder:

> The eleemosynary banquet of French cuisine was the darkened church auditorium of his agon, the Germanic garden of his ordinary powers, the high-cholesterol haemo-globin of Dracula's craving.... the beautifully decadent canvas of Dorion Grey.... the Frankenstein Manster in Tinker Bell's Castle.... To be brief, language for him was no ordinary bill of fare, but a veritable arsenal of dangerous Jungian canapes....

He was on the roll, and had obviously read his Michelin....

While self-diagnosis saved travel-time, he routinely had difficulty collecting his fee....

Johnny thought he'd have TURKEY next time, but it was a hard call to make, TURKEY or GOOSE....

They were both FOUL, and ducks made QUACKS....

*****

Then it was the MBC News Hour.

With Baldy Blandish. The Dadanian perfect man. Or that pious old baggage in the artsy spectacles. Who was she? Hanna Gabbler? Hedda?

On The Urinal the Dadanians broadcast life-story sketches about Anglican sled-dog trainers in the Sub-Sahara. Miracle cancer-cures in Palermo. Johnny had trouble remembering what other crap. He had only spent half the waking evenings of his life ingesting it.

Maybe it was really an extra-insidious kind of coma-shock therapy. Boring one into a trance state. For the subliminal messages encoded by Baldy and Hedda or Hanna or whatever-her-name-was into the radio beams and broadcast on The Radio Hour like a wave-born plague. Poured into the ear, like toxic treacle....

Dadania is not a shit-heap. Dadania is not a shit-heap. Dadania is not a shit-heap. Just kaka....

Thing Street Asylum

Only this time it was different. The vehicle intended to convey the usual kinder and more caring thing in pince-nez to its regular appointment in the cranial Dadania House. Smashed into a fire hydrant. Soaking Mackenzie Queen.

Things The Maxer told Johnny about. Or maybe, Elmo! Whom Johnny felt he'd known all his life. Turning up on The Urinal....

The woman who'd been abused (and what woman hadn't?)....

She' been raped. Lost her mind. Said it was like being on an alien planet. A higher plane. A different galaxy, but hostile aliens recaptured her and took her back, to the Asylum. Three men rushed her. Stripped her. Stuck a needle up her ass. It was rape, by hypo....

Somebody's parent came on. Mad because she'd finally had to turn in her son, just to get him a doctor's appointment. Said no parent should have to turn in her own son. Society should do it, for her.

If she'd been his parent he'd have turned himself in.

The parent said patients should take their meds, or go back to the Asylum.

The reporter said that wasn't a choice.

The parent demanded what choice was. Total freedom?

The reporter asked her if former patients weren't free.

The parent said they weren't. They were crazy.

The reporter asked her how she knew.

The parent said expert help. Psychiatrists. Shrinks.

A few things had been killed by patients over the years. A lot more had been murdered by non-patients. Nobody suggested they be rounded up or drugged.

Patients out on the streets. Wandering aimlessly. Unable to get the help they needed. Left to fend for themselves....

In court. In jail. In trouble with the law....

Here's the money. Sixty million for this year and more later. It's nice but it's not enough. Only a downpayment. Hogtown alone needs three hundred million loonies. Dadollars. The hospitals are still going to close. No permanent stay of execution.

If losing weight is driving you crazy....

*****

A survivor loomed in the doorway, with a watch to sell. He wore heavy glasses and was short and stocky in a leather jacket and a turtleneck sweater.

Roger Corman....

He said he had hydro-electroshock in 1976 and never got over it and never would get over it. He was traumatized for life.

He used to read Jane Austen and listen to Mozart.... His family had him committed....

His sufferings brought him closer to Jesus. He prayed a lot. God helped, too.

Johnny asked him what he prayed for.

Forgiveness, he said. For my father and my brother.

Had he forgiven them?

He said he prayed for them.

Were they on good terms?

He didn't know. They were dead. He was a survivor. Remember?

He wondered if Johnny thought he was crazy. Johnny said he didn't know what it meant. Lock sane things in a room and in a little while a minority will be crazy, according to the majority. It's incurable.

Why write about it, he demanded.

It's reality. We're inmates of Thing Street's virtual asylum....

Yeah, crazy....

*****

A 20 year old single Methodist, her occupation listed as domestic affairs, M.L. was committed on June 7, 1883. Her propensities and delusions were listed as fond[ness] of reading & music and a religious tendency even though the physician added that she had no delusions on this subject.

The cause of her madness appears to have been a desire to excel at school which was injudiciously fostered by her teacher, though wisely resisted by her mother.

Under facts indicating insanity observed by himself, Dr. Riddel listed M.L.'s complaints of head-ache and eye-trouble and her general restlessness. He included in this section the observations and opinions of others, as reported to him by the subject: [she] says every one makes fun of her and accuses her of being jealous of her sister ... that her friends say she is crazy and wish to put her into the Asylum.

After expressing his own suspicion that M.L. was a secret masturbator, the doctor described an odd scene: During my examination her mother went to the door to call her son (the patient's brother), when she ran out after her mother saying that she wasn't going to stay alone with that fellow, that he wanted to kiss her, etc.

Workman lists, under facts indicating insanity ... observed by himself, M.L.'s lofty ideas, on the subject of her education, and an air of dignity that he obviously considered inappropriate to her status.

*****

Babyface Marjoram insisted. He was middle-class. He'd heard about Thing Street even before he got committed; that was why he chose The Sharke.

It was relative.

Johnny supposed it was a synchrony, a system of signs determined not by references but by differences among themselves.

Fucking idiot....

What Babyface liked about The Sharke was that it was NOT Thing Street. But take Thing Street away, and what did you have?

What we have now, that's another story....

Thing Street had the worst rep of any place. If anything his folks hated it even more than he did. They wished he'd died intead of gone to live in Thing Street Asylum, Dante's lowest circle of Hell, with the sign taped to the door (at Thing Street it would have been scotch-taped), Abandon all hope....

If he had to live, why couldn't he just live on the street, like the children of respectable things. After all, it wasn't the middle ages. It was the 60s!

For a while, he did.

He assaulted some guy downtown. They'd been pitching pennies at each other. Then Babyface threw a quarter and gave him a concussion.

He probably was brain damaged!

The cops took him to admitting at Thing Street. The examining psychiatrist had a fifty-cent piece....

Even so, it took two attendants armed with silver dollars to subdue him. They must have converted all their assets, to specie.

The next thing he knew, he'd been committed. When it hit him where he was, and without any change, he escalated. He needed Largactil, to calm down.

He woke up in a wet pack, with the nurse sitting beside him, counting her pennies and telling him to relax. Easier said than done.

He said that his family visited him a couple of times. His father said if he didn't learn how to hang on to his money, he'd end up at Thing Street for keeps.

Just wait till he had a nickel....

Lucky for them, they didn't have loonies yet....

*****

Johnny was tired of Sharpshanks. He borrowed money, one toony at a time. Loonies were beneath him.

One day he borrowed a total of six dollars, one toony at a time. The third time he began by stating that he realized he was becoming a bit repetitious. He'd rummage through the barrel of clothes before asking, or he'd stand in the doorway; or he'd just ask.

Johnny asked him how he lived. He said he got six hundred dollars a month from the government. It wasn't enough to live on. Johnny said he'd evidently run out and it was only the middle of November. He asked him how he'd survive till the end of the month. He said he didn't know. Johnny asked him what he usually did. He said he got enough for a coffee and something to eat. Here and there. He called Johnny Mien Herr.

*****

Babyface assured him that the management would never throw him out; by now, he was a regular. They wouldn't mind if Johnny only had a coffee, if that was all he could afford. Johnny noticed that Babyface always had dough and he resented it, because he had to walk to their rendez-vous. Which he arranged from payphones in doughnut holes, because he couldn't afford a phone either....

Strange, he was thinking.... Babyface was only at Thing Street for a year, at the very end of the crazy 60s. He said he was in Ward 69-A or B, and they wasted hours trying to figure it out, because one was a ward for females. Later, he spent 6 months at a nearby boarding house....

Thing Street Asylum

The guy tried to con Johnny, by doing his loony act: sticking out his tongue, bugging out his eyes. It was to differentiate himself from THEM. He didn't seem to like THEM very much. They were so negative about Thing Street; they were whiners. Later he qualified himself, feeling remorseful. They just didn'have a positive attitude. They blamed the system.

It occurred to Johnny that Babyface had learned to work the system, despite his insistence that he had to struggle to survive. He said Thing Street threw him a life-iine and made him stop whining, but he was only giving Johnny a line.

Babyface was a moocher....

*****

Babyface Marjoram showed up....

Raving about the psychiatrists and therapists whose reports and evaluations he depended on for things like a food allowance, a better apartment, a scooter (he had a bad heart), a package deal, etc....

Babyface wanted C. Lamprini Eel to write him a letter to get him assisted housing at Thing Street Asylum, on the grounds that the Simian Sands was over-run by druggy-looking things, none of whom would give him any more credit.

Babyface Marjoram said he appreciated the bargains Johnny sold him. He needed a letter from him too, before Trixie came over. To prove he hadn't spent his start-up money on dope. She wanted it. For CRACK....

He couldn't wait for his next psychiatric assessment from Dr. Eel. Maybe if it was bad enough, he'd get the penthouse at The Sharke's. So he could burn it down again....

*****

Babyface Marjoram said he'd been seeing a lot of Eel lately. He'd already started to fill up another apartment with his things.... His old one at Dungass and Gethard was so full of computers, VCRs, and radios that he had to use the shower stall for storage.

He reminded Johnny of someone Trixie told him about. The father of a client who lived in his house, with her daughter. The father was such an obsessive collector of things, it wasn't safe.

Trixie was afraid she'd pull a Victrola onto herself, and die. Trixie got the women an apartment, but after a few weeks they returned to live with their father. He used their apartment, for a warehouse....

Johnny heard WHOREHOUSE....

He asked Johnny if he had any toys for him today. Electronics!

Nothing since Friday, Johnny said. Thursday was Delivery Day. When all the regulars showed up. Thingaholics! They could hardly make it from one Thursday till the next. They needed a fix.

Babyface Marjoram was sick.

Saturday night he was just sitting around in the drop-in centre at Shalom Drop-In Pizza Parlor Food Bank and he stopped breathing. He couldn't talk either. He hoped someone would notice that something was the matter, but he usually didn't have much to say anyway. Fortunately he had his puffer with him. After the second puff he started breathing again. If you don't start breathing after three puffs, you die. The puffs smelled like ether.

Johnny asked him what was in it.

Babyface Marjoram said it was nitroglycerin. You couldn't smoke and puff at the same time, or....

Yeah, Johnny said.

Kaboom!

Of course, Johnny considered. If you can't breathe you really shouldn't be smoking either.

O, I don't know about that, Babyface said.

*****

Babyface Marjoram was depressed. He was moving his things into his new apartment. In fifteen minutes a dozen things went in and out of the apartment next door. He told Dr. Eel that he wasn't moving next door to a crack den. C. Lamprini Eel said he was now a participant in his latest research project, The Effect of the Drug Trade on Senile Dements....

Babyface Marjoram said where he really wanted to go was Hammtown. The Promised Land. Cheap rents and proximity to the United States. What more could a bum want?

Johnny saw the attraction. But how was he going to find a place?

Pioneers of Alienation

Babyface Marjoram said he looked up apartments in the classified section of the Hammtown Expectorator. He found one hundred and twenty unfurnished apartments. A lot were under four thirty-five, what he got from his benefits. Less than he was paying now.

Johnny asked him if that meant he would get more for himself.

Babyface Marjoram said he obviously didn't know the system....

*****

On February 7, 1903 Colonel Elliott was out-maneuvered by the Board of Management.

He was informed by one Mr. Kent that CHANGES WERE TO BE MADE AT ONCE TO PUT MATTERS IN BETTER ORDER, ETC., ETC. (2). These included replacing Miss M. Martin with a young lady [who] was to have great authority (2). Elliott typically undermined his disinterested stance by appearing to desire a position himself, on the Executive Committee. He left Mr. Kent,

> with a clear understanding that I was to fall in with the proposed immediate REMEDIES, help them and and [sic] co-operate generally in bringing about a better state of things! I suggested that if I were put on the Executive Committee, I would from my knowledge of 50 years, be better able to help. (2)

Mr. Kent did not see his way clear to this, but he referred Elliott to one Mr. Hunter. Elliott left Hunter with the same understanding (i.e., co-peration) (2-3). Hunter requested him to send copies of his charges to Mr. Kent, Dr. Parsons, and himself.

It seems that Hunter, Kent, and Parsons were willing to accept Elliott's services, but without conferring on him the status of an equal. To at least some of the gentleman he solicited, Elliott must have resembled a social climber. While his concern for the patients at the Home probably was genuine, Elliott's emotional reaction to official stonewalling was at least partly indignation at being shut out of official circles where he felt he belonged. Nevertheless, Elliott obligingly asked the Mayor to refrain from any action on his charges, as it was undesirable to bring the matter before the public, as it might cause a falling off in the subscription (3).

This reprieve, and the detailed information of the charges, were probably what the other Board members really wanted. Instead of thanking him for his information, as Elliott rather too naively expected, Dr. Parsons attacked Elliott in a letter, asserting that his remarks were UNWORTHY OF A CHRISTIAN GENTLEMAN (3).

The Evening Telegram, in an article entitled Defending the Home: Ambrose Kent Replies to Charges Made (Friday, February 13, 1903), reported the visit of a delegation from management to Dr. Chamberlain, the Inspector of Hospitals. The article related that the delegation was headed by Mr. Ambrose Kent and describes it as influential.

While the article repeated Elliott's charges, concerning the food supply and other matters pertaining to the well-being of the institution, it characterized them as sweeping and abusive. It asserted that Mr. Kent contradicted these statements, but without indicating how.

The article is characterized by complacency at the social prominence of the members of the delegation, and by euphemistic diction that betrays the allegiance of the writer. For example, he referred to the well-being of the institution, but not once to the well-being of the patients. It apparently wasn't their well-being that he had foremost in mind.

In his letter to the Evening Telegram of Saturday, February 14, 1903, Elliott was irritated by the newspaper writer's deferential depiction of the delegation as influential, and was sensitive to the negative connotations of the word, as he called for a more open enquiry, not one manipulated in a back-door manner by deputations, however influential they might be.

An anonymous correspondent, quoted in the article from the Globe of Saturday, February 21, 1903, headed Home for Incurables, expressed great joy at reading that Colonel Elliott had written to the Mayor about the disgraceful condition of the Home for Incurables (Globe, February 21, 1903). The writer claimed to have been a visitor at the Home for many years, and during that time

> never saw the place so ill-kept and dirty. Patients go for weeks without getting a bath, food is of poor quality and poorly cooked, and management enforces an atmosphere of cheerless austerity.

This writer dwelt sentimentally on management's refusal to allow patients to put Scripture texts and all their pretty little things on the walls. He sounds like one of Elliott's voices....

*****

Later Babyface characterized his attitude as ambivalent. He heard voices.

Voice No. 1 said Fuck off, you dirty whiners.

Then Voice No. 2 said Wait! Don't go! I want to talk to you....
Then Voice No. 1 said, Let them go. They are whiners!
Then Voice No. 2 said Why are you always telling me who I can talk to? Why won't you let me talk to anyone I want?
Then Voice No. 1 said Because you never talk to me! Why won't you talk to me for a change? I am Voice No. 1
I'll talk to you tomorrow.
You are dishonest when you say that. I should never have trusted you.... you talk to whiners....
Because they never had a chance.... Why won't you at least give them a chance....
They leave cigarette-burns on my mental furniture....
You are just air in the pipes....
Oh!
I don't talk to what comes out of the plumbing apparatus....
Babyface was cracking up....
Johnny told him to get a grip.

He swallowed hard and resumed.... He was talking about his career at The Sharke Institute, which he said everybody called The Sharke Tank. Johnny read in a book that they called it The Sharke Hotel.
Thing Street's patient's were all working-class or just plain bums. But the Sharke's guests were middle-class sons and daughters of doctors, lawyers, educators....
Babyface was still a teenager; he had made a fiasco of Grade 13 by his persistent refusal to learn French. He said The Sharke wasn't afraid of Frogs. The Sharke freed him, put him on his feet again, and taught him self respect, man. The Sharke told him he would never have to take another French lesson so long as he lived!
Everybody getting experimental Sharke Treatment on the 12th floor was under 25. They sat in lotus position under the great glass tank and studied his feeding habits....
The Sharke set the tone. The Sharke said never go home to your parents again. Come out of you closet and groove....

Johnny was starting to feel like Sharke bait. He didn't think the guy was gay. Johnny was, and the guy knew it; he wasn't in the closet, was he? What did he mean?

He knew that Thing Street Asylum was a very homophobic institution. Some of the nurses confided to him that they were gay, but insisted that they had to be in the closet because of discrimination. If it was bad for gay nurses, it must have been very bad for gay patients. Those open toilet stalls....
Johnny recalled his experience at the big event, the trough-out that he helped research, a celebration of the absorption of the mental hospital by its ancient rival the (aptly named) Sharke Institute. It had really been a wake for Mental Health care in Dadania.
He overheard a high-up administrator observe to a heavily-bearded social-worker that he, Johnny, was with the gays; otherwise, she would have taken him out. Johnny knew she wasn't thinking of dating him....
He remembered how approving some of the older nurses were of a passage he read them from Dr. Workman's 19th-century reports. Workman wrote that the cure for masturbation was marriage. Johnny wondered, What if you were gay?
What if you were, Johnny? Then it was just wanking.

Meanwhile Babyface was narrating his second visit to The Sharke. It didn't do him any good either. That old magic just wasn't there any more....
Thing Street brought him back to reality. A first, thought Johnny. Babyface was reading straight out of a self-help manual....

Johnny asked him if he felt The Sharke had failed him. He said, he failed himself.
Johnny wondered. That chubby-cheeked Eatone's Boy-Councilor?

Deane goes to the Doctor. Dr. Eel. In his creepy office in the old Hogtown Psychiatric Hospital.
Johnny's ideal wants the Doc to straighten him out for the Anglican priesthood(!).
C. Lamprini Eel claims he can turn him into a man. The clergy regularly employ him for precisely that purpose.
Dr. Eel mesmerizes him, just like Svengali. Then he drugs him. Thorazine or clozapine or some other equally powerful neurotoxic subtance, that rhymes.
Johnny's ideal immediately gets a big gut, turns bald, grows tits.
Then Eel starts asking him a lot of insinuating questions. Did he like sports? Did he play soccer? Wouldn't he enjoy sharing a hot-tub with the whole soccer team?

Johnny studied pictures of C. Lamprini Eel in old Annual Reports of the Hogtown Psychiatric Hospital. His yearbook. A heavy-set, square-jawed stud in heavy tortoise-shell glasses.

Suddenly, it hit him.

He'd been an Eatone's Junior Pioneer!

*****

Johnny imagined that one day the old bag lady with the name tag would come in looking for something she could buy for a quarter and walk off with a 9-piece mahogany dining-room set.

The next day she'd hurl it through the plate-glass window screaming, it was veneer.

Why this obsession for solid wood? Like that bitch from the suburbs. Johnny sold her a crummy press-board Thing Anne dining table for a hundred bucks. Two days later she came back all the way from Outer Scarberia screaming that they'd deceived her terribly. Johnny'd told her it was solid wood. No, he'd said solid, meaning shit.

Romeo gave her a lesson on veneer. He said it was like sex in a relationship, first shiny and hard then chipped and pealing. It used to be more valuable than solid, because it had to be worked at, but that was before the days of mass production made it common, and cheap.

He offered her a table with a solid wood core as opposed to glue and sawdust, but the stupid cow just blinked at him. Romeo said he'd come for her table in a few days, and refund her money.

The days turned into weeks, the weeks into months, etc. She came back again, screaming that she wanted her money. Romeo gave it to her, and told her to keep the table. She was so delighted she immediately bought two more tables. She returned the money Romeo had just given her, and more.

Sucker, Johnny thought.

It was years before she got her tables.

*****

She was buying a tall dresser to store her panties in. She wanted big deep drawers.

Yeah, Johnny thought....

De Profundis....

Archie Douglas probably had deep drawers....

Meanwhile, her mother had the deposit....

She seemed relatively normal, which wasn't saying much....

Planter's warts sprouted under her mood-rings....

She said she didn't realize her cat was female, till it got knocked up. He should have seen the look on her face, when its water broke.

Johnny imagined it: stunned imbecility.

He felt sick....

She started raving about flesh tags....

She should have gone to a doctor, but hell, things've been doing it themselves for years. So she heated a pair of kitchen shears with her Bic, and snip-snip-snip. Her mother said Honey, you shouldn't have done that. She showed him the tiny scars around her neck, under her tits.

He wanted to puke....

That was nothing compared to the young man who described his grandfather's boil. They accidentally discovered it when they moved him into a seniors' apartment.

They thought he was smuggling a cat in....

*****

The limey bugger with the rude French dog. He was always buying books about roses, but he was a crook. Never paid what anything was worth....

While he was rummaging through the things, for a twenty-five cent post-card he could get for a nickel, the dog started to bark....

It was creating a distraction....

The creep paused in front of the Zsa Zsa Gabor head-board. Just his style....

The dog bayed at it....

The commotion drove away a tall young man with wavy dark hair and beautiful white runners....

Deane?

*****

Thing Street Asylum

Psychiatric nurses. Indistinguishable from clients.

On the landing. In the apartment next door. On the corner. Workers waiting for clients. Pimps....

Johnny saw more than a few around....

Like the guy seated at the 50s retro-look kitchen table in the otherwise empty walk-up across the street from Thing Street's post-modern answer to Florence Nightingale.

Listening to his transistor....

Hearing a fucking shrink on the MBC. Professor Eel....

Nattering about his spanking new Brain Scanner. Quoting Hippocrates. How everything came from the brain. The host said so much for nurture. What about GOD?

Yeah, what about him....

*****

Trixie. In a long black cape with an enormous shoulderbag full of safes, paper clips, candy wrappers. Thought she was Trixie Cavell.

She bought an old yellow-painted pine dresser.

She looked harried. She paid the balance on her three plastic imitation Louis XIV French Provincial stacking tables, her chandelier, her wrought-iron French cafe chair.....

Johnny could tell, there was something else on her mind.

You have a Ph.D., don't you?

Yeah, sure.

I want to ask you to do me a favor.

Ask.

I want you to edit an essay for me.

O yeah? She squinted at him.

I'll pay you, of course....

Her course was Introductory Post-Modernism for Mental Sex-Workers.

The HOMO POMO....

Something to explain where the lunacy came from. She knew where it ended. Thing Street was a great help to her. Her work was cut out for her. She would never again be unemployed.

She knew what it was like to be on welfare. After an interview with a poverty pimp she wept and shook her fists with rage. Now she was addicted to pay-cheques. Only being a student paying for courses on post (psychotic) modernism with worthless dadollars was like being on welfare all over again. Johnny guessed she didn't want him to ask her for a tip....

He gave her one, instead....

She should write on Celine. Voyage! There was a book for her.

Picaresque?

*****

Bedlamesque!

The word Babyface chose to describe Thing Street Asylum.

A middle-aged female patient prostituted herself in the unsavory passageway connecting the Administration Wing to the Old Building.

The interior was illuminated by hydro-electric tubes. It had hardwood floors which had absorbed a century of piss. The windows were glass panes with a lattice-work of triple-ply heavy-gauge steel, like a baseball fence.

Babyface said there was some sort of ventilation. Or maybe he opened the window....

Looking out all he could see was the back of the wings.... Airing courts....

He said the nurses woke him up at 7:00, to judge by the light. As for telling time by the clock, he said that there could have been a clock somewhere in the hall or over the nurses' station but lunacy didn't keep banker's hours.

They lined-up at a central place outside the nurses' office, for mind-altering drugs from Dixie cups. They picked up the cup with the pills, swallowed the pills with a glass of water, and returned the empty cup to the nurse. The nurse talked to them, only to make sure they'd swallowed the pills and weren't holding them under the tongue.

At seven most patients were still in pajamas. Some were quick and got dressed. Those that had clothes got changed for breakfast at eight....

Things who were new on the ward had to wear pajamas. You had to work hard to get your clothes back; you wouldn't want to elope in institutional pajamas.... They were so ugly, with big wide pin-stripes....

Pioneers of Alienation

At 8 o'clock everybody with clothes lined up for breakfast. They opened the doors between the women's ward and the men's. The lifers immediately grabbed several bowls of cereal at once and started stuffing their faces. Disgusting to watch....

He was eating his usual Caesar salad. Stuffing his face with big dark green leaves of romaine lettuce....
The parallel was striking....

Johnny told him about the big bash to celebrate the merger of Thing Street with The Sharke Institute and the Ministry of Lotteries and Casinos.
A coup d'etat!
The long awaited joy of it! C(old) K(iller) Sharke came in his teak-lined coffin.
The patients were excluded, except for the usual pets.
A hurt-looking Patients Council accosted Drs. Praetorius and Eel at the door. Inside the food was Neronic. Heaps, mountains, volcanic eruptions of every kind of delicious HOT FOOD....
They trashed The Wonderful Post Mortem. They chomped and swilled through it all. No one bothered to walk upstairs to look at the pictures. They were too stuffed....

In his After Dinner Talk, Praetorius dilated upon one of his favorite themes, how a stay at $CAMH, would soon be nothing more than a TRIP....
To the Dentist....
Maybe, HIS dentist....

When it was over Max the Butcher snuck in with Bronson Alcott to steal the leftovers. Bronson took one look at the ruins and vomited right after Giffer Gibbon. Even the leftovers were decadent. He would have enjoyed a nice ham sandwich but it was all eel intestines, squid eggs, chimpanzee brains ....
The grand-daughter of the original Inspector of Prisons and Asylums, a failed musician with the Hereditary Taint real bad, started to play a little tune on the xylophone and sing: Peo-ple ... peo-ple are the essence of this wo-o-rld.
Shit, Johnny said.
Later that night, at the display, a steady stream of survivors came in to get warm. They occasionally glanced at the pictures. One woman kept reminding him: Sir, I have a suggestion....
Yes?
HOT FOOD!

Johnny shouted, so the rest of Cafe Society could hear.
HOT FOOD!!!
CUM'N GET!

*****

One Mrs. W____, on Thing Street, who taught a Bible Class in the home, of some 25 or 50, testified that patients complained to her about the terrible food they were getting ... their care and treatment (1). She often had to attend to the patients herself. The commonest form of abuse was sheer neglect: wanting to be attended to and no one to attend to them; wanting a drink and no one to give it to them (1).
The patients complained to her about being filthy with vermin, both body and head. She described herself teaching her Bible class, with her heavy wraps on, surrounded by the poor patients... with shawls around them, shivering with cold (1). She observed that [t]here was plenty of coal, but no steam on (1).
As for the food at the Home, she asserts that she would not give [it] to [her] dog (1):

> It was hardly food. The soup was just like dirty dish water, and the stew smelled most horribly. The pudding was just like a piece of dough. The milk was simply water with a little milk poured into it. (1)

Other testimonies were similar.
Patient X complained on behalf of fellow patients and herself, after they had been unable to get even ... the real necessaries, being left from seven o'clock p.m. until half-past eleven next day. After complaining to the head nurse, they had to wait even longer. By real necessaries she meant a chamberpot. She complained that when she did get it she had to sit on it for two long hours (6).
Another patient, poor Mrs. F-, a poor old paralized woman, was heard crying unattended in her room all day; her dinner was finally brought to her, but no one fed her for several hours. When a nurse finally did so, the food was cold; afterwards she was left sitting on the side of her bed, half-naked despite the plumbers passing up and down all the time (6).

Patient X's nurse noticed that Mrs. F-'s bed was soaking wet, but she was afraid either to help the patient or to tell on another nurse. When patient X saw the other nurse put Mrs. F- back in the unchanged bed, she arranged to speak to the Head Nurse. The other nurse denied the accusation, bathed Mrs. F-, and finally left her without a blanket, crying with the cold until the next morning. The next day Mrs. F- was similarly neglected, left sitting in the bathroom, with all the windows up for two hours, with only a thin petticoat and dress-skirt on (6).

Patient X had difficulty getting her medicine with any regularity: she was to have powders after meals. She got them for a few days then went without five and six days (6). For four days of the last week she had eaten only a piece of bread and butter for her dinner, tea and breakfast (6).

*****

Twenty minutes after eight, breakfast was over. Then they chilled on the benches, on the couches in those big long corridors....

*****

At the display a tough Scottish woman, a clinician came up to Johnny like she was going to punch him out. How do you like the display, Johnny asked her.

It's fine except for all that shit you wrote about the old building, she said. He had described the thick walls as fortress-like. She said bull shit. They were cool in summer. Freezing in winter, Johnny wanted to add but didn't; she really was tough.

Under a picture of a corridor like a deck on the Titanic, Johnny had posed the rhetorical question: What kind of therapeutic milieu would THIS facilitate?

She tapped it with her index finger. Fuck off, she said.

Die!

*****

Babyface said, he sat in the corridor and watched the diners emerge, looking for a mark....

He saw somebody getting rolled, and he would have joined in, but he was too bored....

Too lost, he whimpered....

*****

At ten there was Big Group. Once a week they met with Big Nurse. Occasionally, with the doctor. Big Doctor, that is....

They discussed who was Miss Behaving....

Johnny thought he was....

Babyface, he meant....

The nurse gave a little progress report. In front of everybody, you'd be exposed!

That was Monday....

There were ward meetings in the cafeteria. They'd talk about everything that happened in the last twenty-four hours. Big Doctor presided. Big Nurse ratted on them. It discouraged romantic involvements with anyone else....

He said there were never any questions about sex....

Sure, Johnny said. He didn't believe him. After all, it was the 60s....

He remembered one of the nurses telling him what some lunatic told her. There was nothing the patients couldn't get, if they wanted it. One day she lost her key to a medicine cabinet she always kept locked and she had a terrible head-ache. She was holding her forehead and a patient asked her why she didn't take something. She told him. The cabinet was locked and she'd lost her keys. How many tablets did she want? But it's locked, she moaned. No problem, I'll get them. He did.....

Johnny imagined it was like that with sex. Sitting around for days in those famous all-weather corridors like bowling alleys on big red-leather over-stuffed psychiatrist's couches....

Legs crossed, exposing several inches of hairy naked calf....

Crazy ankles.... and (finally)....

Deane's eponymous part....

That Johnny never properly worshiped in the air-conditioned archives of embalmed case histories disguising with funereal fumes its animal funk....

*****

Babyface said, You should never have an affair with a mental-case.
Johnny appreciated the warning; however, so far as they were concerned....

*****

As for the therapeutic milieu, you could get your lights punched out....
That tough-guy argot again, but Johnny knew. Most survivors were Neville Chamberlains, so long as they stayed on their meds. When they went off them, there was no appeasement...
It was what Jah Lo See wanted....
Hitler's comeback....
He hated that word....
RETURN!
He remembered one who looked a lot like a former prime sinister of Dadania. He always wore gold pince-nez and a 3-piece suit. He attempted suicide once a year, by leaping off the third floor into a flower-bed.
That sure beat shooting yourself in the mouth....
Violence was sporadic, but ever-threatening. Baby hated things who made rude noises at lunch, stuck out their tongues and rolled their eyes, the whole bit. Johnny understood. He sympathized....

Lunch was at 12 noon. At one-thirty there was Occupational Macrame. They weren't long sessions because, on Thorazine, things' concentration wasn't that long. Neither was the twine....

You didn't get much time with your shrink unless there was sex involved....
The shrink was a college basketball jock gone to seed. He'd must have looked sweet, his hairy ankles in fruit-boots.... It was all a dim memory, like the collective consciousness of ancient Greece....
Professor Eel hung up his fruit-boots and put on a goatee, for that Freudy look...
Babyface admitted that he was awed by the psychiatrists. Such STUDS!

Supper was usually over by six. In the evening they watched The Beverley Hillbillies. Jethro was his favorite....

There was no Big Nurse on his ward, just Masha Ratchet reading Mental Hygiene tracts. The Sociopath Among Us. A line-backer with braids like anchor chains on the Mauretania. An ultra-white uniform so heavily starched it creaked. A collar like shark fins rising. An enormous iron ring of gleaming skeleton keys like elephant tusks. He imagined her slamming them into the temples of refractory incurables, felling them instantly....
Babyface called her angel in the hot panegyrics he wrote her in the nurses' lounge, sipping tea....

Johnny had his own favorite nurse at Thing Street.
During a rehearsal for the big MERGER NIGHT ASYLUM BALL, they huddled on the mezzanine overlooking the cafeteria, discussing the future of mental illness....
She said they locked the mezzanine doors to prevent patients from jumping, but they just came up through the cafeteria whenever they wanted to get away. Policy!
She said the shrinks practiced on their children, so they had the most fucked-up brats of anybody. Johnny compared her to the Big Nurse in Casey's book, but she said she didn't associate with things like that, or with things who associated her with things like that. Johnny stopped teasing.
She said she had a patient who was a great artiste. She gave him paper cut-outs to do to humor him. He did them, she later realized, to humor her. She said to say good-bye to her before he left. Which meant that Johnny didn't have any future, at least not there. She had a nice way of telling you things!

*****

At eight the nurses went around and announced that it was time to return to the ward. Some patients got depressed and stank, so the nurses had to tell them to take a shower first. The attendants made sure....
On one side were shower stalls, on the other rows of open toilets. Workman planned it that way; otherwise, patients would have hid in there and masturbated all day....
He was in bed by nine or nine-thirty. The doors were locked. The circular staircase was locked. The door between the men's and women's wards was locked....
Everything was choreographed, a dance routine by June Taylor....
The problem was, like all good numbers it came to an end....

Thing Street Asylum

Then you went upstairs and beat your brains out with a chamber pot....
Or anyone's who had any....

*****

A 25 year old single Church of England lady, V.M. was readmitted for a recurrence of her former delusions, the cause of which remains unknown. Dr. Workman completed one of her Certificates. Under facts indicating insanity observed by himself, he lists certain persistent delusions on the subjects of love, marriage, & religion. He never states precisely what these delusions are, but given the volatile nature of the subjects they almost certainly were what today we would call value judgments. Workman clearly did not share them.

Some of V.M.'s other delusions included dislike of home, and inflexible determination to reside in the Insane Asylum. That Workman so unhesitatingly bases his diagnosis on such beliefs, suggests that he is effectively diagnosing V.M. with what at earlier times he termed moral insanity[41] or monomania. Workman demonstrates a refusal to see beyond the walls of the Asylum into the families or, more precisely, the family life of his patients.

The accompanying Certificate, completed by Dr. Burgess notes her continual talking about love and religion and high mental exaltation. V.M. evidently lived with her mother and was normally quiet and domestic.

This is the same V. M. who, on April 1, 1884, bludgeoned her room-mate to death with the night-pail.

*****

Babyface insisted that Thing Street did more than The Sharke to smarten him up. One of those phrases again....

Johnny was beginning to wonder if they'd been implanted by staff in microchips inserted in his penis or his brain or other unused part. They were triggered when some outsider started asking too many questions about the asylum. When Frankie showed up, and flashed an ace.

Babyface Marjoram was the Manchurian Candidate.

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[41] See, for example, Dr. Joseph Workman, "Case of moral mania?," American Journal of Insanity 19 (1863): 406-16 . In `Case of Moral Mania?' written in 1863, Workman seems especially sceptical of the `purity' of the disease, implicit in which is the `purity' of insanity itself. Workman has been able to account for other cases of alleged `moral insanity' in terms of what he calls an `intellectual lesion' (410). Even the `purest' cases of `Moral Insanity' eventually degenerate into `unequivocal intellectual insanity' (410), as we would expect `unless, indeed, we can believe that the mind is but a loose conglomeration of sovereign and independent faculties or states, any one or more of which may, when it sees fit, secede from the union' (411) -- a blatant appeal to the Federalist side in the Civil War then raging in the United States.

Workman goes to some length to emphasize the regularity of his patient's life, and her good performance at school where her teachers found her `very clever and attentive' (406), at least before her first `attack': `Her previous habits of life were certified to have been regular' (406). The initial attack lasts for some six months and consists of `K.S.' destroying her clothing by `cutting out pieces, generally of circular shape, with scissors' -- not without striking indications of the `order and method' (406) which Workman finds inconsistent with `genuine insanity'. At the same time Workman suggests that K.S.'s mother might be too hostile to K.S. to be objective: `A long detail of other bad deeds was supplied by the mother, sufficient to qualify a dozen candidates for asylum lodgment' (406). He himself resolves to be fair and impartial:

> Notwithstanding the very unpleasant impression made one my mind by the preceding history, I resolved to treat the girl according to her present conduct, and practically to ignore the entire bill presented by the physicians and the mother. (407)

After three months at the Asylum, K.S. does not appear to be ill; Workman asks her to write to her mother, to inform her that there seems to be `no necessity for her [daughter's] further detention' (407). When the mother fails to appear to retrieve her daughter, Workman writes to the mother himself on April 20, 1862, and learns by return mail that no letter has been received. The mother comes on April 25, and takes her daughter home.

The daughter repeats her earlier offense. The mother returns with her daughter three or four days later, carrying `another bagful of samples of her scissorial handicraft' (407). Again, the most striking detail to Dr Workman is the symmetry and order of with which K.S. has vandalized the samples, which indicates to him that `they were not the work of an unsound mind' (407). Workman concludes:

> whatever might be said as to the wickedness or wantonness of the acts, four months' close observance of her daughter had failed to show me that she was insane, either intellectually or morally, and I believed she was quite a free agent in all her conduct, and all her thoughts. (407)

Nevertheless, the mother begs him to readmit K.S. Dr Workman agrees to do so on the basis of a second certificate of insanity.

On May 1, 1862, the mother duly produces a certificate on which `lunatic' has been crossed out and a phrase inserted: `a monomaniac with the propensity to the secret destruction of property' (408).

K.S. indicates that she would like to leave the Asylum, but not to go home. She declines to explain why she destroyed her clothing. Workman decides that K.S. is really suffering from what he calls `moral insanity', and represents a very good example of the same: `one of the purest and least complicated I have ever heard or read of' (409).

In committing her destructive acts, it is very certain she felt not "constrained by an irresistible impulse, contrary to her convictions of right," but, on the contrary, she was well aware that she was doing wrong. (409)

Dr Workman interprets the silence of `K.S.' when asked why she vandalized her own clothing, and even provides her with words borrowed from the patient of another doctor, the famous Isaac Ray. When asked for his motivation, this patient explained that it gave him ‘an indescribable pleasure to do wrong’ (410). K.S. is an even purer example of ‘moral insanity’ because Dr Ray's patient was only apparently free from any other mental impairment; K.S. really is, apart from the `moral insanity' itself, mentally sound.

Pioneers of Alienation

He admitted. He'd done all right by the system. Not everyone was so lucky....

No kidding, Johnny thought: the derelicts, the rooming house transients, the ruined novices (Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre), the aging garret ephebes (Johnny), the faded catamites (Bruce and Butch), the pretty boys (Lance Dishlexy), the failed professors (Johnny again), the mountebank quacks (Joseph Workman and C. Lamprini Eel), the slumlords (Chuck Handy), the media moguls (Citizen Hearse), the corrupt workers (Trixie), the decadent peers (Trixie again)....

The Fall Guy, The Hero, The Victim, The Martyr, Christ, Osiris, Adonis, Corydon....

Thorazine Zombies slowly cake-walking down crummy, haunted Thing Street to Johnny's bankrupt Thing Store....

It really was a part of the neighborhood, but Praetorius's URBAN VILLAGE loomed over it like the fuck-palace of a sadistic Commissar.

That might explain the over-bearing or precious names for streets (now "ways" in quaint $CAMHGLISH): Freedom, White Squirrel. There was nothing free about the site, which resembled the expensive folly of a cult compound, and there wasn't a white squirrel around.

One black squirrel tore off across the lawn, trying to hurl itself under the wheels of the onrushing Thing Car. It had the right idea.

Johnny didn't want to live there either, with beaming idiots calling streets WAYS, rooms ALTERNATIVE MILIEU UNITS, land-grabs TRANSFORMATIONS, scams HOSPITALS!

Thing Street really toughened you up! Babyface was the Pillsbury Doughboy....

Then he finally said something that rang true. Like a clarion, or a tocsin. Which Johnny only wished he'd heeded!

Thing Street taught him how to work the system.

He was staring at his boots. He started to natter about them, where they were made, when he bought them, how much he paid. With his fingers outstretched like toes, he demonstrated how, in order to adjust to the swelling of his feet under stress of heat and pressure, his shoes had been scientifically engineered by a firm of gay Australian fetishists....

The only good thing Johnny saw, was a cigarette butt. There might yet be hope for humanity, at $CAMH!

He thought anyone who knews the culture at all, would have knwn how stupid that was. Maybe Praetorius just didn't LIKE it....

Why not just BAN THE THINGS?

Ah! That's how!

They had good reason for smoking. It was even written up in the DSMIV, something to do with dopamine enhancement. Look at P. 304: "Nicotine Dependence is especially high, with estimates ranging from 80% to 90% of individuals with Schizophrenia being regular cigarette smokers. Furthermore, these individuals tend to smoke heavily and to choose cigarettes with high nicotine content."

Were they supposed to smoke right on THING STREET, outside DADANIA'S most INTOLERANT address?

He wished they'd STOP their stupid SCAMMING!

$CAMH – Shopping Centres and Model Homes!

The PR department at $CAMHospital must have had the double-concurrent disorder real bad. Because even their signage was retarded. Actuallly it was too stupid for the work of any professional advertising firm. It must have been the work of academic psychiatrists, with their warped and dated sense of reality.

Slogans like WE'RE REMOVING STIGMA - beside a huge blow-up of a fat black bitch with a GREAT BIG AUNT JEMIMA GRIN. Was she supposed to represent the HELP? The simple things all happy and contented in the shadow of the NEW BIG HOUSE? What the FUCK! And they called this TRANSFORMING ATTITUDES, REMOVING STIGMA? It was TOKENISM! It was RACISM!

It was GOODBYE UNCLE TOM!

Then, what WAS all this CRAP from Praetorius, about being PART OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD? How did he think they think they lived, before $CAMH came along?

It IMPLIED that they cowered in unlit cells on dirty straw, before THEY came along; that they weren't a part of the neighborhood or the city, before THEY came along; and that the complicated issues of madness they'd spent a lifetime addressing, were unsolvable before THEY came along and TRANSFORMED them, by asserting in slick videos and obnoxious commercials, that THEY were doing so.....

The first of its kind, in the WORLD? Had none of them heard of a shopping-centre, of a MALL, or of METROPOLIS, about the folly and HUBRIS, of attempting to rebuild Babylon, on the backs of the poor and the mad?

What had they lost? What gained?

Lost, a place where they could go.

Gained COMMERCIAL RETAIL SPACE, where they wouldn't be welcome, a CONFERENCE CENTRE, which they couldn't use, a parking garage, and most of them didn't even DRIVE!

They already had a gymnasium (intergenerational wellness centre).

Thing Street Asylum

*****

STATE CAPITALISTS loved to announce SEISMIC BREAKTHROUGHS and HISTORIC MOMENTS - but Johnny couldn't help noticing, it happened EVERY FUCKING TIME they scored another MONEY FIX down Thing Street.

When would people get tired of this, since STATE CAPITALISTS never would? There was no dialoguing with them. It was all unilateral PROCLAMATIONS, DECLARATIONS, DECREES....

It was the dumb old MONOLOGUE all over again. Reason against madness, reason getting all the lines.

A washed-up vaudevillian would do a better job - but couldn't be more ridiculous.

Of course, the lines didn't have to add up, not for Praetorius's MENTALLY ILLOGICAL PROPAGANDA MINISTER, with Citizien Hearse's MEDIA MACHINE.

1 plus 1 made 3 - or whatever the HELL they said.

A big DONATION made a TRANSFORMATION - or whatever the HELL they said.

They were REMOVING STIGMA - and 20% of Dadanians were MENTALLY HELL - or whatever the HELL they said.

Speaking of which - wasn't that what their much-vaunted FRONT DOOR – or, rather, PORTAL (at $CAMH gymns were INTER-GENERATIONAL WELLNESS CASINOS, ROOMS were THERAPEUTIC MILIEU UNITS, etc.) - really was: HELL MOUTH to STIGMA LAND - where their corporate friends addressed the fact that JOHNNY CALLED IN SICK FOR WORK AGAIN TODAY - DIDN'T HE! HE DIDN'T LIKE STATE CAPITALISTS VERY MUCH – DID HE?! HE WAS OFF HIS MEDS AGAIN TODAY - WASN'T HE!

$CAMH: State Capitalists ADVANCING Mental Hell - Removing the Stigma from MENTAL HELLNESS and SLAPPING IT RIGHT BACK ON JOHNNY - HARDER THAN EVER - FOR HELL TELEPHONE, et al....

But, really, if they'd known the history – and they DIDN'T - they'd have known that for nearly 200 years there had NEVER been an adequate front door on the ASYLUM / NONE OF IT'S KIND Hospital on Thing Street. There was originally supposed to have been a Grecian Porch, like the PARTHENON - no less! They finally, perhaps wisely, gave up the grandiose idea. Because they needed the money for more important things, like CARE - and the questions remained....

How do you put a door on HELL? Then, once you've put a door on HELL, how do you KEEP IT THERE?!

STATE CAPITALISTS thought they'd solved the problem, by slapping the name of one of their nastiest corporations, over the front door. In case mad people didn't know where they were - the HELL TELEPHONE CO. – JUST LIKE BEING THERE!

Where was the TRANSFORMATION? The IMPROVEMENT? They'd been EVICTED, from their own ASYLUM...

Meanwhile STATE CAPITALISTS campaigned against cigarettes, pushing anti-smoking drugs that triggered suicide....

*****

Throughout his pamphlet Elliott repeatedly invoked direct, personal experience against the self-interested middle-class professionalism and canting language of the system.

That experience extended beyond events at the Home for Incurables on Thing Street:

> For 50 years I have visited Hospitals, Homes, Prisons, Reformatories and Asylums, in West Indies, in Scotland, England, and in four cities and towns in Canada. So I have some experience. (1)

Elliott was an expert, well-qualified to make judgments on the basis of extensive direct experience. He was also, as a retired soldier, an amateur who could not speak, let alone write, with any professional authority on medical matters.

Thus, when Hogtown's Mayor Urquhart refused to address Elliott's complaints with more than a bogus investigation, that was obviously really a cover-up and, worse, called Elliott's experiential data hearsay, Elliott demanded:

> where he got HIS evidence? Certainly not from visiting for six years. Certainly not from REAL CONSTANT PERSONAL CONTACT WITH THE PATIENTS IN VISITING! in sorrow, and in sympathy! (3)

Ultimately the issue was not simply hearsay versus real evidence, but several totally incompatible kinds of reality. What were qualifications to Elliott weren't to his enemies, or to many of his dear readers. His having been a lunatic himself for six years, through mental depression caused (he said) by the conscientious discharge of his duty (4), for many was the ultimate disqualification.

Pioneers of Alienation

What followed illustrates what happens when a very experienced and passionately concerned amateur meets a class of professional philanthropists and care-givers, amateurs themselves in terms of medical knowledge, but professionals at power.

Poverty pimps....

*****

The boarding home was only an extension of Thing Street Asylum....

His Eastern Block landlady was paranoid about losing her license. So she kept her house clean, there weren't many fights, and the food was OK. They ate a lot of spaghetti, and potato soup. Breakfast was at 7:30 sharp. He remembered the box with Aunt Jemima's big fat grin on it. For decoration....

He shared a room full of losers, and waterfall dressers....

He was especially hard on The Doctor. He was a self-pitying anal twit in his late 50s, a lecturer who didn't talk to things, a status-seeking sociopath who finally managed to isolate himself from the universe. When things saw him coming, they beat it....

Noel Noel was a teacher in a school....

Tell it, Baby! The Face was rolling....

An alky, a sponger, a pervert....

Johnny thought he'd solved the mystery of The Doctor. Why, he could only be Dildo, Dr. Dildo Wingnut. Johnny's old thesis director from Montage U!

The Nazi from New England....

No doubt, he had his good points....

Wrong! Suddenly it dawned on him. He had a Ph.D., etc., etc. He was The Doctor!

Babyface kept whining. They should have made some effort to screen things for the home. There he was, sharing a room with drunks, perverts, lunatics and.... DOCTORS!

They ordered him and his room-mates not to talk to the neighbours. They were persona non grata; not at all what he was used to.

He recalled one lodger who jumped in front of the subway.

Was he hurt? Johnny asked.

Babyface glared at him. He was a sweet, innocent teenage schizophrenic whose mother was a well-known schizoid personality from Thing Street....

Aha! C.K. Sharke's hereditary defective!

Yes, a harmless schizophrenic who never had a chance.... A beautiful person who refused to trouble his Social Worker with his needs, because he knew her caseload was onerous and she was leaving next week....

For Fire Island....

Never had a chance....

The landlady broke it to him.... He took The Better Way home....

Subsequently Babyface got lonely in the House, so he started to exercise. He took up synchronized swimming....

While other guys sat in the front room or loitered on the porch and smoked, he dreamed of entering the Olympics....

After he finally broke away from his family, he got clothes from his girls. Trixie, and Carlotta! He didn't remember going to the Sally Anne. He looked at his shoes again; they cost a month's rent.

Yuh gotta have a good front!

At first Babyface went back to Thing Street once a month. It was his womb, his chrysalis and he wanted back in. But he was afraid that if he did anything funny they'd slap him with a community treatment order. Finally he got a good job with the civil-service of Dadania and everything was swell. He wore a flash suit and won the COURAGE TO COME BACK pageant for 1986. After the banquet in his honor the patients came up to him, just like he was a DOCTOR....

Then he moved to Montreal and enrolled in Mooday Studies at Montage U. Where Johnny met him....

Only when he returned to Hogtown, Professor C. Lamprini Eel gave him his Diploma (hand-engraved and suitable for framing)....

Transformed, thought Johnny.

Everything worked out swell in....

The End....

Was Eatone's ever wrong?

*****

Johnny quit in October, after Lance was badly maimed by several residents for stealing their drugs and hiding them in the women's dorm.

Johnny said it was because he was being harassed by upper management. Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre, Messalina, and the latest addition to The Junta, Deloris Costello

All stage-managed by Citizen Hearse.

The Junta sacked all the supervisors. It was their equivalent of widening the streets of Paris. So the guns could get a better aim....

Oakridge went critical. He wrote Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre about conditions, especially the practice of handing out all-night passes to sex-trade workers....

Trixie said it was spoiling the trade....

He'd seen these women return in the morning, beaten, sick....

He'd nothing against sex-trade workers or holding beds late for them (it was recommended by Shelter Standards), but he found the all-night passes objectionable, at least in need of re-examination.

True, Citizen Hearse could rent out the same bed two, three, even four times a night.... That wasn't how he made his money....

He made his money by fixing the market....

His Zoncolite Girls were the market....

They set their own price, high....

That is, till Oakridge started, in effect, to subsidize the whores with all-night passes.... The first thing they did, was lower their rates....

What a mistake to confide in The Vixen, the defrocked homosexual novice. She did nothing about Johnny's memo, except rub it several times up and down a Fissure, not Orlando's, before passing it on to the ever avid Messalina....

She referred it to The Chief....

He said Johnny was right, but get rid of him anyway....

They waited for the opportunity....

This happened next month, with Deloris Costello. Although Deloris was officially the manager there, she had difficulty writing a sentence in English. It came out like something by Chico Marx, or Harpo....

Johnny was understandably sympathetic to the problem, but he doubted that she would have done any better in her native Brazilian....

He guessed Deloris Costello was part of the dumbing-down process. She signed her name to a memo (written by Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre for Messalina), presenting the early closing of the dorms at Emile Durkheim House as a client-centered measure, intended to help the residents find jobs, revive social and religious life, return to nature, etc.

Johnny'd already been helping Deloris Costello tamper with the minutes, so he gave her some more advice....

She should tell the residents the truth for once, that the early closing was for staffing reasons. She didn't have to elaborate, that the staffing problem was caused by Citizen Hearse doping his employees, getting them hooked in a Zombie condition, then withholding their meds when they objected to his taking a cut of their pay for what he euphemistically called the Indigent Native Scholar Fund....

The memo was preachy and condescending. The residents weren't stupid, just crazy. They'd see through it immediately....

Johnny's advice wasn't appreciated. Deloris heeded it, then she reported him....

Sorry to do this to you, JOHNNY!

They summoned him to appear before Night Court, a criminal! No anti-oppression theory for Johnny. Their tactics were strictly ante-bellum.

His disappointment was tempered by the fact that it wasn't entirely unexpected....

Pioneers of Alienation

Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre arrived in the principal's office, intending to surprise, and trap him, into appearing before their impromptu Session.

She didn't even say, Hello! Instead, she jostled him in that narrow space, the Nazi Sow!

Johnny supposed this was just another of the weapons in the arsenal that she deployed when threatened. Sows like her never felt safe.

After all, she'd wasted an entire career, indeed her whole life, in shelters, food-banks, seminaries, monasteries, convents, and retreats, depending on which gender she identified with at the time, where nobody had exercised or even glimpsed any legitimate authority since WWII and Eugenio Pacelli, and he was a fraud!

It went up in flames, and ovens. They were just bullies.

More than anything, with stupendous size, in butch-looking Tilly Endurables for Women, and tough-girl goatee, proof certainly against any over-the-counter depilatory, that is what she was.....

A bully, a thug....

For confirmation a mountain of dark clothing stirred behind her, in the Principal's Office.... Smoke rose over a hat brim....

The Chief was in....

He was with his clients....

Johnny quit, which was what they wanted.

He'd been quite fond of Lance.

He still felt bad about the C.

*****

Carrying piss in a paper cup. Balancing a happy-faced stir-stick like a gargoyle. Babyface Marjoram pretended not to see him. So Johnny saluted him.

Heil, fucking BUM. Look out!

Babyface Marjoram's initial reaction was SHOCK.

Because he had not only seen Johnny, he had RECOGNIZED him. Worse than if he had merely been inattentive, or suffered another stroke, he had endeavored to ignore Johnny for fiscal considerations. Those TEN DOLLARS he still owed him for the radios. He dreaded restitution.

He struggled to disguise terror as astonishment at Johnny's absence from his THING STORE. At least he managed not to slop his drink.

Hey! After all, he had not recognized him.

Hey yourself, snob.

You weren't in the store! Babyface Marjoram feigned wide-eyed panic. As opposed to the wide-eyed relief Johnny imagined he must have really felt, at the prospect of never having to pay him back.

The fat guy came out.

Yes?

I asked him where you were.

Yes?

Babyface Marjoram paused.

Yes? Yes???

He said you WERENT THERE!!!

*****

After the disturbing eviction from the Little Home on January 17, Elliott brought his concerns to the attention of the Mayor. On February 3, 1903, the Mayor indicated that he would be glad to take the matter up at the earliest opportunity (1). In early February different visitors to the Home testified before City officials.

Elliott's charges were initially supported by City Relief Officers. One Frank J. Walsh, accompanied by the Colonel, visited the Home on January 30, on the orders of Edward Taylor, City Relief Officer, City Hall. He recorded instances of brutal and neglectful treatment, as told to him by patients.

One woman was dragged, screaming with pain to the bathroom, where her nurses slapped her in the face. Another woman was confined to her bed and left unattended for 21 hours; when she complained, she was told to leave, as she was not sick (2). Another cried out with pain and was gagged. Yet another, paralyzed, was anguished by the vermin that had got into her hair, because the nurses refused to comb it.

Walsh observed that such testimony was corroborated by the testimony of other patients. Even making allowance for having heard only one side of the case, Walsh concluded it was not in the interests of the Institution that this state of affairs should continue without further investigation (2).

*****

Well, Honey, as I see it, you've told me that: I'm fussy and anal, I use dowdy phrases, I need physical affection; you feel sorry for me; I'll become a philosopher, etc., etc.

I'm sorry if this seems blunt, but I find very little in our correspondence that leaves me with any desire to continue....

I do hope that you are able to find someone with whom you can converse who has my outlook, my foot, and my fantastic ass.....

*****

Sometimes Johnny thought Deane was a jerk. He'd take the cigs he was always buying him and stuffing in his little Roots bag and hand them out to everybody like he thought he was J.P. Fucking Morgan. But he wouldn't give him a firm handshake. Not after he said he was a FAGGOT.

He remembered just before Christmas, his last. They were standing together on the front porch. Deane was very unhappy. He hated Christmas because it was so commercial, and he never got cha-cha heels. He was broke! Johnny knew, because he was buying him his cigarettes, and Deane was desperate enough to let him. He said he really appreciated it, every time he went over to his Roots bag and looked in and lo! another carton, but he felt so bad, because he'd never be able to pay him back. Johnny saw why....

He must have held his hand a bit too long, because he withdrew it violently. Then he proceeded to put himself down, like he didn't want Johnny to be attracted to him, and maybe at the same time was enjoying it, and indulging himself a little.

He was just a loser, a middle-aged loser getting a gut, and he was straight.

*****

Remember, Johnny warned him, it's an ACT. Johnny's profile described him. A role-playing Goth-Grrl.

N-no, Deane said. Send me your REAL picture!

Johnny finally gave Deane his e-mail address.

I got it, Deane crowed. I'll send you my pictures. You send me yours. And not just some nude picture you got off the net.

O.K, I promise, Johnny lied.

Johnny waited a moment. Then he checked his e-mail box. He had MAIL. E-mail. Only it was for a FEMALE.

He went to the in-box and read Deane's terse message.

Here are my for real pictures. Now send me yours.

They were of Deane soaring through cyberspace. He might have just bailed out of a crashing Cessna, like a parachutist jumping over the ocean in W.W.II. Except for the red velveteen track-pants tight over his lean hard ass....

Otherwise, he was stark naked. The most beautiful paratrooper ever....

Without the usual camouflage khakis and enough gear to keep house for a month, Deane was incredibly more vulnerable and erotic. His legs looked like they had been turned on a lathe; his toes were almonds. He had ten of them!

He somersaulted backwards like the high-wire strip-tease artist he really was, arching his chest, smooth except for the fringe around his tiny, erect nipples. He bent like a jack-knife, rippling his stomach muscles like a wash-board....

They were the most beautiful pictures Johnny had ever seen.....

He sent Deane a photo of Lon Chaney in The Phantom of the Opera. He hoped he got it.

He wasn't sure.

*****

Workman attributed the delusions of J.D., a 25 year old single Baptist painter, to masturbation. On J.D.'s Certificate Workman describes Davis's standing motionless for hours, his hands clasped as if in the act of prayer.

When the clock struck, J.D. muttered, Blessed be the Lord God!

Dr. Ball recorded details similar to Workman's and cited J.D.'s rapt and emaciated appearance as a likely indication of self-abuse. He also recorded his delusion that his food had been poisoned, and the interesting

statement of his mother, that he arranged the food on his plate in three portions for each of the three persons of the Trinity....

*****

Jah Lo See started calling him Johnny Chinaman. On his way to work in the morning he passed her on her way to the Sisters of Charity. Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre's old order. The Jiggy Sisters. She hated them for thriving on the avails of drugs and prostitution, but they were part of her routine.

Everyone who came for breakfast got two granola bars; she pocketed hers and scalped them to Johnny. Now she was carrying two Styrofoam cups of coffee. When Johnny said hello she recognized him (she'd been in a catatonic state) and offered him one.

The cup had the label of the Neverclosed; he asked her what flavor? There were some horrible ones: English Pudding, French Crepes Suzettes, Steak and Kidney Pie. She couldn't remember which flavor she'd ordered; she said it was for a good taste in your mouth in the morning.

He accepted the coffee and gave her a dollar, which at first she'd refused but finally took. She was poor and had to be realistic at least about that. Then he gave her a quarter, considering that nothing cost only one dollar; she accepted it immediately this time, as if it belonged with the dollar in the first place....

The coffee tasted like Halloween candy; he'd be tasting (stale) kisses all morning....

He started to send her on the little errands that he never had time to do himself, being in the Thing Store before normal stores opened till after they closed....

He would send her to buy a special cable for a Macintosh computer, or an unusual bulb for a study lamp. She would usually get the right thing, and give him all the change with a receipt. He would give her one or two loonies; he was cheap and hypocritical, because he felt good for having given her something to do, and himself less to do....

He sent her to Boot Ass Real Tail to find out if they had any cheap lap-tops; she was his spy. He was afraid that if he went himself, they'd inflate the price (he was that unpopular with J. Zeus Murphy). She enjoyed her mission. She brought him the information, written by one of the hooligans Johnny knew; he sent him his card. Johnny was disappointed that they didn't have anything under a hundred dollars.

He really was cheap....

*****

Trixie jostled her going down Thing Street. She paused on the sidewalk and giggled when the big doggie in the doorway nibbled at her sleeve....

It felt like her husband, the psycho surgeon....

Praetorius, stop it!

She said, Mommy knit it, just for her....

Jose Ferreira restrained his dog, reluctantly....

What was this shit about mommie? She was forty years old....

Old enough to knit her own clothes, or buy them from J. Zeus Murphy's Zombie Crypt Store store, like everyone else on Thing Street....

Johnny told Jose Ferreira. She was now the notorious Doctor Trixie Zane.... The bitch who threw the hairy-fit last week....

She breezed past Johnny, like she had to meet a client, or avoid one....

She wanted Romeo, so she could badmouth Johnny....

Johnny said Romeo was waiting for her, in the back....

*****

Trixie and Praetorius were with a client....

In the middle of his BRAIN PAN....

Trixie hung on Doc Praetorius's every word.... Every syllable....

She adored his mod haircut.... His expensive tight-ass designer jeans.... His hand-tailored blouses made by paeans in Columbia.... His funky all-leather clogs....

His pince-nez....

Most of all....

She adored his SHIT....

By assisting him at operations she was learning about ANTIQUES....

Doc Praetorius paused, his scalpel suspended over a hemorrhaging incision.... He was thinking about his profession.... It was so beautiful.... Every time he cut someone's brain, was beautiful....

It enabled him to buy two or three more antique chairs and HEAL them.... Even if the patient died.... Because thinking about upholstery, about removing the stuffing from some fanback, he cut out too many healthy cells.... Because, sometimes, he forgot and cleansed the wound with paint-stripper that he picked up at Costco on his way to work....

But he made tons more DOUGH than he ever made as a BUTCHER in Panama.... Immigrants with Ph.D.s from the Panamanian Med School of the Airwaves didn't always end up driving cabs.... He operated a whole fleet of them in Panama City.... He did a brisk business with pimps and pushers.... Ah, Dadania.... Some fuck who couldn't cut it in a Panamanian meat-packing plant ends up performing delicate psychosurgery on unsuspecting marks on Thing Street....

He even attended their funerals....

V. F. Weasel-Theatre loaned him her enormous trademark black sombrero....

That reminded him....

Of a particular (non) working stiff he really wanted to get....

Like a patient etherized, under his knife....

That fucker....

Johnny!....

Coming between him and his little treasures....

Romeo always gave him endless credit and layaways, but not Fucker Johnny....

Refusing to sell him any more shit till he got rid of the shit he already had....

Piled to the ceiling, all over the crummy Thing Store....

Johnny told him he was tired of showing everybody his SHIT....

Saying they couldn't have it, it was already SOLD....

Wondering why Praetorius bought it in the first place....

That shit....

Doc Praetorius fumed....

Talking about his fanbacks like that....

Sacrilege!

Trixie nodded sympathetically, ignoring the ebbing Hydro from their victim’s brain....

The waves subsiding....

He harassed me terribly, whined Doc Praetorius....

He said my fanbacks were fucking ugly....

He said they were shit....

Shit shit shit....

Doc Praetorius repeated hysterically, stabbing at the air, at the image of Johnny Boy that arose before him, really his own patient emerging from the anesthetic, which Trixie had improperly administered to begin with....

Fuck, said Doc Praetorius, after his episode. What's this cadaver doing here?

Must be some kinda weirdo, Trixie observed....

Doctors Trixie and Praetorius had things to do, places to go....

It was already after 6.... Garbage Night!

*****

Mitzi always wore 50s clothes: tight rolled-up jeans, a white blouse, a pink Angora sweater. She and her friends were planning a movie about juvenile delinquents.

She spent forty-five minutes in the back of the Thing Store, singing, examining the weird assortment of books on a few shelves and in half a dozen boxes on the floor.

> Your supply of everything that’s needed
> Just meets my demand....

She emerged with a stack of things, which she began to examine more closely in the square upholstered chair across the aisle from Johnny. She asked Johnny if he intended to go somewhere; she hoped she wasn't keeping him.

She wasn't keeping him. He was going nowhere.

He showed her a book he’d already put aside for her, thinking of her project. It was At Home with You and Your Hair. She read the title; it was incredible! Just what she wanted to collect. She would use it in her women's studies course. She went to class dressed as a 50s person with the cover of an old Betty Crocker cook-book for a binder. Her classmates didn't get it; they just thought she was weird....

She crossed her legs in tight jeans; everything was running out.

It was harder and harder to get 50s things.

Everything else was running out too.

Niagara Falls was running dry! All that ass....

The world was in bad shape, and only getting worse. North America was running the clown-show; nearly the entire population of South America and the Far East were forced into virtual slavery, making running shoes for a lot of drug-running alchoholic junkies....

For now....

By the 50s there'd already been two world wars and the century was only half over. Things dressed and behaved as if they were auditioning for bit-parts in Leave it to Beaver and Night of the Blood Beast. They were exhausted! The tension of keeping up appearances was unbearable and many snapped....

Others went backwards....

Johnny described how his family fell apart after his father's return from the war. His brother was spoiled and there were terrible battles between him and his estranged father as the latter tried to assert the authority he never had.

There was yet another secret war, not against communists in Cuba or South America but against fathers and sons at home. It was buried under a domestic facade, silenced by the white-noise of hand-mowers and electric fans. Johnny's father never returned. He was there, and not there. Johnny never heard what he'd done in the war....

It was an old story....

Mitzi interrupted. He saw things die. She was nearly thirty and she couldn't think of anyone she'd actually seen die....

Mitzi told him the story of how her grandfather had been taken prisoner and saved by a Chinese woman who risked her life to bring him food; he returned to find the woman but couldn't, so he named his daughter after her. Isn't that romantic? Mitzi put a pile of books on the chair beside Johnny. She'd chosen books on juvenile delinquency, a few cook books (Betty Crocker, etc.), and some old copies of women's magazines from the 1920s. She said she wanted them all, as she got up and walked back to look at still more books....

While in the back of the store she spotted an old bike, with a heavy steel frame and the wide tires that Hogtonians liked because they wouldn't get stuck in the narrow tracks of THE BETTER WAY. The frame and fenders were an olive green color, and in very good condition for a vintage 50s bike. She asked Johnny if she could take it out the back door for a spin. He said sure.

Johnny knocked back the bolts of the back door, opened it, and helped Mitzi out with the heavy bike. For a moment he stood in the doorway and watched as she test-drove the bike. She asked him if he thought she looked cute, in her tightly rolled-up jeans, pink Angora sweater, and delicate black slippers.

He said yes, she reminded him of Glen or Glenda, when a whole gang of 50s chics, in 50s-style pleated skirts, carrying enormous black patent-leather purses, raped a soda-jerk for refusing to sell them drugs....

There was something the matter with the picture....

*****

The headboard had arborite shelves on the sides, plastered with fake gold-leaf fleurs de lis.

Alena came by in a wheel-chair, with Tony. He was wearing a tie....

She saw what she wanted, and signaled to him, to return.

He parked the chair by the entrance, and helped her up. She'd never quite recovered, being smuggled across the border in his trunk.....

White hair, large red-framed sun-glasses like the ones worn by 1950's movie-stars, by Maria Callas and the Duchess of Windsor, she was heavy and slightly dumpy, but energetic, and very theatrical, a hard bargainer....

He didn't recognize her....

She walked purposefully down the long aisle of things. Dressers, chests, commodes, dismantled end-tables piled up on either side in arrested waves like the Red Sea in Cecil B. DeMille's Ten Commandments....

She signaled to Johnny. She'd found it.

The headboard with two arborite shelves on either end, plastered with fake gold-leaf fleurs de lis....

Eastern Block Provincial!

The Zsa Zsa Special!

How much?

The snob with the noisy dog had examined the same piece (of shit). Johnny had offered to help him, but he'd insisted on speaking to the boss. Romeo told him forty-five dollars, and he'd almost decided to take it today. Now Johnny told the Hungarian woman forty-five dollars, secretly hoping she'd take it instead. Thwart the bastard!

She theatrically waved three fingers. Thirty? Think of your mother, she pleaded.

Thirty, he said, thinking of the man, and his dog.

Alena was delighted. She kissed Johnny's hand, called him prince....

That hand had done worse things....

Johnny and Tony carried the headboard out of the store....

Tony borrowed a screw-driver and began to dismantle it, while Alena waited beside him in the chair. She offered Johnny a cigarette, but he didn't smoke. Out of nowhere, Tony produced a small trolley for the journey home.

They came prepared.

*****

A man entered the Thing Store. He seemed young, but he wore his shit-blond hair hair parted in the middle, 70s style.

It was turning gray.

He must have been at least forty. He was very well-dressed, in a short-sleeved light brown shirt, and light brown pants. Johnny noticed that he wore sandals; his big toes were unusually far spread out from the rest of his feet, which were very clean.

Johnny asked him if he needed any help. He said he'd tell him what he was looking for, when he saw it.

He came back a few minutes later, to Johnny beside a harvest table with a broken leg. He said he was looking for old appliances.

Johnny said they didn't have many at the moment, but might get some on Thursday, when Romeo returned from the States; they usually got loads of that stuff in the summer.

What he wanted was a vacuum.

Johnny said they had one last summer, with a light on it.

A Kirby! the man said. He even named the model. He'd worked for the Company. How much did it go for?

Johnny said thirty, forty dollars.

That was a good price for a used Kirby (and he stated the Model No. again). Johnny said it was nice, with a light....

The man said the latest model combined that feature, and the best features of all the other early models, with the most up-to-date innovations....

Johnny asked, how much?

Twenty-three hundred, he said. Available on a free trial basis, no obligation to buy.

He was a vacuum salesman, giving his pitch.

Johnny studied his face. Handsome, but with a few blemishes. He asked him if he sold them, too?

He did. But he had his own collection; he'd collected his first machine in the 80s. He got all of them from Thing Street.

From the stores, on Thing Street? Something made him think of the Asylum....

Yes, the stores he assured him.

Well, Johnny said. Check back, Thursday.

The salesman had pictures of earlier models from advertisements in old magazines. He offered to show him.

Johnny said he'd like to see them; they'd be very interesting.

All this, over the noise of the vacuum, Alena reading Pioneers of Alienation in Praetorius's fanback, while Tony packed up their bed....

Your name is?

I'm Johnny, Johnny said.

I'm Butch, he said.

He didn't recognize him.

Everyone looked familiar....

He didn't recognize anybody....

*****

Johnny couldn't escape the gigantic sucking sounds....

Sucking up air and water....

Not to mention, all the pretty things....

All that ass....

Like a cataract reversed....

O, roar again....

Mayor Smell Gasman put on a Bozo clown-face and a bright fright-wig to announce that henceforth only expired goods would be sold within the boundaries of Thing Street, off-limits to anything that hadn't exceeded its shelf-life....

He declared Thing Street was henceforth an exclusively shelf-death domain....

Johnny was already accustomed to bottles of marked-down Caribbean champagne cola that feebly exhaled when he opened them, like a geezer's fart, barely a gurgle disturbing the deathly calm....

The hydro flickered and the over-crowded lumbering Thing Street cattle/streetcars lurched to a full stop every time the psychopathic Texan in the Mickey Mouse suit fried a fresh brace of death-row prisoners.

There wasn't enough of anything anymore.

Except things....

*****

A 45 year old married Roman Catholic housewife, M.V. was committed on August 31, 1878 for delusions that time was short and the world was coming to an end, attributed to change of life.

She had been committed twice before to Thing Street Asylum.

The Certificate completed by Dr. Covernton indicated her discharge had been obtained by friends, against the wishes of Dr. Workman, who doubted that a perfect return to sanity had occurred.

Dr. Covernton characterized her delusions as religious.

Dr. Pyne recorded, under facts indicating insanity, M.V.'s suspiciousness. Her husband stated that she'd attended a Masonic picnic where she'd acted in a peculiar manner, suspecting the men she saw talking to women of designs of a criminal nature. Pyne spared Workman any blame for discharging M.V. uncured.

She'd come to pay Thing Street a visit, but couldn't say for how long.

*****

Jah Lo See showed Johnny the letter from Citizen Hearse. It was an eviction notice for stealing and reading her fellow tenants' mail, keeping garbage in her room until it became a fire hazard, crapping in the hall, etc. Citizen Hearse wrote that Jah Lo See repeatedly failed to respond positively to his concerns. Johnny asked her if she ever read her fellow tenants' mail; she indignantly denied it. If it fell on the floor or into the garbage, it was no one's business what she did with it....

As for the hoarding, Johnny knew she saved the things she found on Garbage Night, because she was always giving them to Johnny: a print, a roll of wire, etc.

But he noticed that the eviction date was supposed to be no earlier than 20 days from the date of the notice and it was 20 days before it. When he pointed it out to Jah Lo See she crowed with laughter.

Citizen Hearse was crazy!

She'd been committed to Thing Street Asylum in the 60s. She thought a moment. It was after the birth of her son, so it must have been the early 70s. Before Thing Street she'd gone to The Sharke but he hadn't done her any good. Right after the birth of her son, she'd been very nervous....

At Thing Street she'd been in Unit One. That was for hard cases. She'd been one....

She got up at 6 in the morning before everyone else and had her shower. Then the maid brought her breakfast on a tray with her name on it. After breakfast their group leader, a recreation therapist, took her and her ward-mates on a walk around the block. Or they went to the lakeshore and played a game. They gathered five pebbles each and put them in the flower garden....

They had coffee at 10 o'clock in the mall. It was free. Then they exercised or swam in the pool. After lunch there was a rest period from 1 till 2 o'clock. Then they worked in Ms. Hagerman's shop. Putting key rings together in bunches of 10, or something like that. The women got 25 cents an hour but the men got a dollar. It wasn't fair....

Johnny asked too many questions. She was tired of answering them....

As for Citizen Hearse, he could go to hell. She knew where to go too. She could live at the Mission if she had to.

Johnny asked her if she'd already lived there.

She said for six months. It had been O.K. She made sure she got her shower before everyone else got their stuff all over, and the food was good.

*****

The enumerators kept leaving notices. One on the mail tray. One outside his door. Citizen Hearse must have told them he was there. Or maybe Bozo.

The landlord went by the book and Bozo wouldn't let anyone in except cops or civil servants. Fucker....

Romeo suggested he let Jah Lo See complete his census. Since she read everybody's mail, she probably answered it too. She'd probably done the census for half the neighborhood, giving Thing Street the most Chinese things after Beijing or Towson, Maryland.....

Thing Street Asylum

Johnny was beginning to realize there was more to Jah Lo See than he'd first imagined. He kept thinking about Mitzi, her grandfather, her grandfather's savior....

*****

Jack Was Every Inch a (One-Eyed) Sailor described being a bum on Thing Street forty years ago. Johnny asked him if he had a knapsack. Jack Was Every Inch a (One-Eyed) Sailor laughed. Forty years ago wasn't like now, when young things go around with knapsacks and sleep in hostels.

If you were a bum, you really had nothing. No one wanted anything to do with you. You slept down at the docks or under a bridge. One winter he froze his feet right outside a friend's door. The friend wouldn't let him in.

He had a terrible temper, he drank, and he'd fight anyone. He fought with nearly everyone, except Romeo, and a few others whose opinions he respected. There were always a few, whom he listened to.

Come to think of it, he never really listened to Romeo either, but for some reason he still didn't fight with him.

They were totally different; you'd never find two things more unlike one another.

Romeo couldn't imagine a storm bad enough he wouldn't enjoy being out in it.

Romeo sailed one ship for six years while Jack Was Every Inch a (One-Eyed) Sailor sailed six ships in one year.

Romeo learned patience being stuck in arctic ice.

Sometimes there was nothing you could do.

First time up in the north. Arriving on the basis of general seamanship. But not knowing anything about it. He was fascinated by everything....

The way they had to thaw out the propeller using pipes that had been implanted around the ship before it got frozen in.... The animals.... The seals, whales, and polar bears eating each other on the icebergs....

The third mate got an expensive new watch. Before he came on duty they set the clocks back 10 minutes, asked him what time it was, and told him to throw his watch in the garbage.

Romeo saved his money and built up his thing business.

Jack Was Every Inch a (One-Eyed) Sailor worked until he had a little money saved up, then he went on a bender. Sailing was perfect for that, because you could save some drinking money, quit, get drunk, then go back to work and save up some more. They didn't become friends till after he started to quit. The funny thing was, Romeo absolutely couldn't stand drunks, and here they were practically best friends.

Before he was twenty he'd been in Mimico for what they called habitual alcoholism.

They would do some pretty drastic things to break you....

Once to punish him (for something he hadn't done) they made him march up and down with his face six inches away from a concrete wall; if he slowed down, they whipped his legs with a swagger stick. He marched that way for two days, before collapsing.

They got away with that sort of thing by calling it training for what the enemy would do to you, to make you crack.

If he didn't want to spend six months in jail, he had to take The Cure; The Cure was a pill which made you violently ill if you drank anything alcoholic.

Of course, he refused to take The Cure.

Of course, he said, because....

He never gave in to them, not to the social workers, not to the army, (especially) not to the doctors....

They were the enemy....

*****

The experts said the Edmund Fitzgerald sank because it lost buoyancy. No kidding. Johnny wondered why not just say, because it sank.

The Mariposa Belle, the Titanic, and the Sam McFee....

Connn-stan-tin-o-ple!

Down they went....

The coast guard were obviously as fucking stupid as the English Department at the U of Titz. Only they would have said the Edmund Fitzgerald never sank at all; it was a media event....

The painting called Admiral Bowman. A ship sinking behind a hotel....

A collector saw it.

He said it wasn't worth the canvas it was painted on....

*****

The massy barrier and the siren-chorus
betray the sailor while the purple coral

whose failure was the reason of his drowning
distracts him for a brief success.

The real
asserts its order in a droned accord
confused by voices singing sharp or flat
or richened, others say, by voices blent
whose added tonic differs from the ground.

The singing canvas or the painted music
works not amusements, not eloined from muses
ut pictura poesis when the line
joins past and future in the present note
an organized existence, at command.
Say, whose decision was it voiced the order?

The tenor voice asserted over strings
and contradicted though no argument
prevailed through it unless it were obtained
from complicated business, heavy-scored
with scotches in the lacquer on the boards.
And all this ocean-liner opulence
a plume created and a plume required.

The dolphins that have navigated seas
and mitigated the effect of ocean
on princes that had acted better Visions
translating them from kingdoms to a Kingdom
from motley cities to one Only City
disheveled buildings to a single Tower
that burgeons underneath the perfect moon:
cavort, bright bodies, swallowing and speak

The torment of the waves, the climbing surf
one stolid ocean turbid near the shore
the other gleaming pale by light and land
together beaten on the fought-for beach
resounding water silvered by the foam.

*****

L.D. was admitted on July 2, 1877. A note on L.D.'s History, addressed by Dr. J. B. Andrews of the New York State Asylum at Utica to Dr. Clark, described her present condition as dementia following an attack of prolonged acute mania.

In hope of her rallying and recovering, and to have her nearer home, her friends decided to place her in Canada....

In Thing Street Asylum....

Ha, ha, ha!

Elsewhere in her History L.D. was described as a 21 year old single Episcopalian student from Quebec. Her propensities included feeble-mindedness, carelessness about her person & dress, and apparent indifference to her condition. Her condition was thought to have been brought on by ill health. She was reduced in flesh & anemic.

Under facts indicating insanity Dr. Riddel records L.D.'s statement that she had been in Utica Asylum for some time. She complained to him about her treatment there, in particular her having been given chloral hydrate for months.

She claimed that she was not mad on entering the Utica Asylum, but she was after she left....

She now asserted she was sane. This assertion was listed among the indications of insanity.

Under facts ... indicating insanity ... communicated ... by others, Dr. Riddel improperly listed L.D.'s own assertion that the cause of her disorder was disappointment in love. Riddel noted L.D.'s apparently violent aversion to her family, in particular her mother, but made nothing of it.

Dr. Lett reiterated L.D.'s claim that she was driven mad by conditions at the Utica Asylum. To him, however, she appeared not to have complained so much about the treatment as about the noise. Under facts ... communicated ... by others Lett recorded her mother's statement, inconsistent with the statement on her History that she was feeble-

minded, that L.D. was always the first in her class at school. The mother believed that L.D.'s insanity was precipitated by over-study.

Workman recorded L.D.'s opinion that the Utica Asylum itself caused her insanity, and her hatred for her mother. As usual, however, he didn't pursue these leads. He dwelt instead on her sleeplessness, her fears of dying of heart disease, her suicidal tendencies.

*****

Jack Every Inch A. (One-Eyed) Sailor was in the Greasy Moonshine Rest-o-Rant at the intersection of Thing Street and Rancidvale. It was full of reeking smoking guzzling bums but that was fine because he was a bum himself. He was the worst fucking bum on Thing Street.

That was something.

Thing Street had the worst bums in Hogtown and Hogtown had the worst bums in Dadania and Dadania was the shit-assed Bum of the Nations....

Naturally, he got the bum's rush for dancing the horn-pipe with 2 canes and his pace-maker on high....

He was pissed off.... Got no fuckin' R.E.S.P.E.C.T.... He was gonna go down and brow-beat Johnny.... Johnny would give him some R.E.S.P.E.C.T.... The one person left on Earth whose face he could shit on with impunity....

Only he was wrong.... Stupid pathetic senile FUCK.... He thought Johnny would give him the 50s-look bathroom scale for $5 so he could find out how much weight he lost after he quit smoking because his heart stopped in the middle of yet another losing game of pool with Romeo....

His heart started a few moments later, but he was sure he would have won this one if only he could have kept playing.... If it hadn't been for the chest pains, and the dizziness....

Then fucking Johnny said he wanted $20 for that thing that wasn't worth $5.... Jack Every Inch A. (One-Eyed) Sailor had another heart attack.... He protested.... It was just a THING.... It was OLD....

Johnny demanded what the fuck he thought they sold.... They were an ANTIQUE store.... They sold OLD THINGS....

That's for sure.... Any body'd have to be fucking crazy to buy it....

Johnny said all his customers were crazy.... He liked them that way.... There were so many....

Jack stormed off to his jalopy.... He had a real hot-rod bought with a wad after his last ship came in and he cashed in his package.... Then he remembered.... He still hadn't got any respect.... It was what he wanted even more than that bathroom scale....

He came right back to tell Johnny off.... He said if he ever entered his store again (which, he intimated, was extremely unlikely), he didn't want Johnny to watch him all the time, to stand over him like some kind of vulture, to stalk him from one end of the store to the other....

Johnny said Fuck Off....

*****

Porko hung out with Johnny selling things to morons on Thing Street....

After business hours normals were friendly....

Porko was paranoid....

Johnny asked him to share another pitcher of watery beer with him at the Thing Street Styeway where they swilled.... Porko liked it.... It was legally designated a club.... Porko smoked ciggies without Thing Street's Finest Kraut-Farting Nazis dragging him off like the Jew everyone knew he really was.... It was great....

Porko said he didn't have time to swill....

Johnny was sorely disappointed because he wanted to do a whole lot more than swill.... So what else did he have to do that was more fun than swilling.... 'N fucking up the arse....

He said TYPING....

Schizoid Fuck! Paranoid about Johnny's typing ability.... Forty words per and every one a jewel and ALL about Porko.... His 13 dizzy-bitch X's.... His (approx.) 8,000 slag bros. not a faggot amongst them.... Especially after they put down that bastard runt Nigel.... Father Boychuck sold his butchered remains to Doc Praetorius for vivisection.... After his own private post mortem.... Holy Daddy-o poisoned him to death at holy communion.... Ambrosio looked the other way.... He had other worries.... His Vatican bank account.... The C.E.O. dangling from a viaduct....

Typing WHAT???

Just typing.... And LAUNDRY....

Johnny figured.... Porko's favorite thing.... Johnny asked him if he'd consider postponing it at least until tomorrow....

Certainly not, he said.... At least he had to do the sorting.... Then he had to get kibble for Alpo San's COMFORT POMERANIANS....

Johnny figured the stupid fucking she-male fag-hag dead-beat gyneolatrous wussy-boy bottom really was typing.... E-mailing Scripture Cards to approx. 8,000 hairy-breasted fag-bashing he-brothers....

How he'd found another one....

Like Nigel....

*****

Awe, cumon, let's get a pitcher uh sudz n shw-i-i-i-l-l-l-l....

N-n-n-n-o-o-o.... I musn't....

Why not?

Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre!

Fuck you! The idea of invoking that lush, as a model of temperance. Johnny got up in a hurry nearly turning over the table, laden by now with pepper steak....

We're getting nowhere, he announced removing a twenty in da-dollars from his purse.... It amounted to 50 cents U.S.... There's for dinner, he said....

B-b-b-u-t-t-t.... W-w-w-hat ab-b-bout m-m-m-y l-l-l-aundry....

I'll deliver it....

Johnny returned to the thing store to get Porko's knapsack and his dufflebag. They were full of a week's worth of his dirty brats' stinking snow-suits, ski-jackets, long-johns, gym socks, etc.... Porko always bitched that Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre never did the laundry right with everything coming out smelling spring-fresh as your arm-pits after showering with shamrock-green deodorant soap like leprechauns used....

Johnny hadn't realized after he unlocked the door and went in that Porko was right behind him. When Johnny turned around he saw him standing in the door with his arms spread out a little as if he was about to embrace him. Johnny handed him the laundry. Porko took it silently and walked away looking blank. He probably only wanted the laundry anyway, but Johnny would never know for sure....

He'd wonder if everything would've been different if he'd just said something....

Later he wondered what he'd say to Porko's step-kids if they asked him how come he and Porko weren't together anymore.

To Johnny Porko was either a male fag-hag or a closet homo or both....

He wasn't sure the kids would be familiar with those expressions....

Which was underestimating them....

*****

Porko was reading Pioneers of Alienation.

It imploded his brain.

He was beginning to think HE was DEANE.

He was a graduate of Cardinal Ambrosio's Boytown Collegiate Institute. That year the separate school board of greater Hogtown was swamped by Portuguese Immigrant Eurotrash claiming refugee status because they were Jehovah's Witnesses. They claimed sure, they could speak English real good.

They got certificates, lots of them, signed by Ambrosio himself, proving they were really Catholics all along. They got welfare money, and they still had houses back home that they rented to the gypsies. Little Porko couldn't claim refugee status and get welfare to sit and jerk himself off all day long in a hot steamy portable classroom so instead he worked all day all grade 9 filing cards in the library for free.

He also had a paper route and with the money (the same immigrants were always moving around, no fixed address, and ripping him off) he saved up and bought one of those approx. 8,000 brothers a used piano....

Nonetheless he was beginning to believe that he was really DEANE, the one and many....

That really meant that he was just now only beginning to realize what everyone else might have suspected all along, at least ever since at eleven or twelve he took it upon himself to change his brothers' dirty boxers and prayed God and Holy Church to give him, more than anything else, tits with big nipples to breast-feed them with, and maybe as a bonus a broom and a dust pan....

He probably was a FAG...

He had Deane's pits....

His FOOT....

On a waterfall dresser next to Johnny’s asylum study, an old video. A Beautiful Mind.

Porko knew, it was about him....

*****

Thing Street Asylum

They were standing on the steps. Deane was smoking. Johnny was saying something about the stress he was under. He said he coped with it by turning into someone else. He guessed that sounded pretty bad.

Deane said it sure did.

The cell-phone rang. Johnny saw that it was from Deane's X, and handed him the phone. Deane left him alone on the porch for a few moments to talk to her privately in his room. When he got back he could see how tired Deane was. He guessed it had been a hard day. His cigarette was nearly exhausted too, and beginning to burn the railing. They resumed their conversation but without the same enthusiasm.

Please don't be schizophrenic, Deane said. He must have thought that was what he meant.

*****

The Rev. Parsons accused Elliott of having something in his past, which would not bear the light (4). Elliott admitted without shame that he'd been in a Lunatic Asylum for six years, through mental depression, brought on by a conscientious discharge of duty (4).

An article in the Globe of Tuesday, March 3, 1903, was headed Charges Unfounded. Inquiry into Management of Home for Incurables.

The matron read a letter on the morning of the investigation, threatening the patients with expulsion if they complained. While some patients complained anyway, these complaints were attributed to mental weakness.

*****

He never told Deane that the someone else he tried to become was him.

When he felt himself wanting to shout at Gabriel for asking him for a cigarette every five minutes, he remembered the level tone of Deane's voice and tried to imitate it.

When he was tired and wanted to cut corners by not sweeping behind the garbage pail in Romeo's store room, he moved it and swept behind it in Deane's name.

When Porko tried his patience he remembered Deane's reasonable firmness and remained calm.

He followed Deane's example and did his job. As much as possible he did it the same way Deane did it. Without idealism. He did the best he could, so no one could say he didn't.

*****

A neighborhood of paranoid schizophrenics trying to cut off one another's disability allowance....

They started something and the charities took it away....

Didn't know how to run it properly, to make a profit for respectable poverty pimps like themselves....

Those S.U.V.s hadda be paid for somehow....

Not to mention Trixie, with her BIG HAIR and her floor-length leather frock-coat.... Telling Thing Street pushers how to raise killuh pit-bulls, and Pomeranians....

Don't you dare hit the poor things....

Then telling their widows and unwed mothers not to smack their brats when they were running kamikaze-style into the maw of some killuh pit-bull whose homicidal serial-killer tendencies had never been curbed, thanks to....

You guessed it....

Trixie would have hated kids and dogs, if she'd ever had any....

*****

Traffic like schools of brightly scaled fish streaming past Johnny's thing-filled window, like he was an aquarium ornament....

Coelacanths....

An idiot conceded that he'd be in a bad mood too if....

He were conscious, Johnny silently added....

A two-headed beast....

A boy on his father's shoulders, riding by....

Trixie, where are you....

To give them a few pointers....

*****

Pioneers of Alienation

Johnny threw the disgusting fake marzipan chokelite bars back on the pile in Mahmud Fukabuk, the Persian's....

The usual lineup of senile dements, Jamaican cut-throats, eurotrash traitors, welfare cheats, academic frauds, and high-school teachers made waiting an exercise in bowel control....

He wasn't good enough for their august ranks....

What Porko called him....

A ragman....

*****

Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre. To think Porko called her Honey.

She said hi, Johnny. How are yuh?

He decided it wouldn't do to be silent. It would make him look moody, like he cared. He said not bad, thanks. In the sing-song voice he'd learned from Romeo. It meant (and sounded like) fuck off and die, idiot.

How are you? he continued in the same canting tones.

Good, she said. But he was already at the store. He'd learned that from Joan Crawford. To always be polite while indicating that he didn't give a shit....

What he really wanted to say was: Fantastic, you witch. And where's the other one? Yeah, you know.... Your co-witch or witch-sister or witch-mate whatever yuh fucking caller....

The Shaggy She-Monster. The one with the snakes like locusts, so frisky. Numerous as one of those Egyptian Plagues....

*****

When Porko bent down to sweep the GASP sports shirt and the GASP boxers parted, exposing the top of his bum-crack, like a fissure opening in the surface of the earth, disclosing the funky joys of the underworld....

*****

Alapaloozah tearing along the 401 in a Sports Utility Vehicle. The kids hopping like popcorn from back seat to front to back to front again. Dialing the lovely VIXEN FOXY WEASEL-THEATRE on his late-model cell-phone.... The usual blackmail....

He was gonna rocket crash everybody into the nearest pylon if he didn't get invited to the eldest's next birthday party. The phone ringing and ringing. Pick it up, bitch. Or I'm gonna....

The phone rang in a void.... He wiped out....

VIXEN FOXY WEASEL-THEATRE woke up screaming, her favorite comfort Pomeranian assaulting her....

If only Alpo-San could have seen it....

He would have hare karied....

Johnny woke up, all flushed and happy....

They'd shared THE DREAM....

*****

Natasha's dog died at 3 A.M. She went into the pusher's next door and cried till 6 A.M.

Only yesterday Porko'd showed her the cutest little yellow dog she'd ever seen. Freak, his Pomeranian. It was really hard to lose your own dog when somebody else had such a nice one.

She looked so mournful, fat red wales and puffy-eyed sitting on the Thing Street steps. Johnny passed her going in, but said nothing beyond the usual pleasantries, as he struggled with the lock.

Wouldn't it be simpler just to buy a new one?

Natasha regarded him strangely.

I mean the lock, he said.

He'd actually thought of buying Natasha another Pomeranian. At least they were small.

However, Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre was fresh out of dogs and it looked like Alpo-San was never coming back, after his last flit to Beijing.

Thing Street Asylum

There was a note taped to the door of the stately Georgian town house that till recently had also been home, sweet home to upwards of several score Pomeranians, Freak's siblings and near relations, among whom cute, little, yellow characteristics were definitely in the ascendant.

It requested anyone with a message to call the following number, beginning with the country code for Manchuria.

Porko dialed it and a man with a thick Middle-Eastern accent answered.

Porko said he was looking for dogs. For Chippie, Crack, and Squeaky, to be exact.

He said they were all gone.

Porko said he was really looking for Alpo-San, who still owed him and Vixen Foxy $10,000 for dog-sitting the last time he was AWAY....

He was about to relate how the City inspector had determined that Alpo-San's Pomeranians exceeded the legal quota for a non-commercial property and had threatened to freeze his assets when all of a sudden the dogs disappeared, when the line went dead.

*****

Trixie started calling herself Medical Superintenent and Chief Psychiatrist of Emile Durkheim House.

Johnny wondered who she assisted. He'd heard she wasn't any good!

Johnny met her outside her crib before descending the dark-varnished stairs, and she told him so. That was because he'd refused to open the Beastly door for her, when she rapped her key imperiously and glared, as pert as (a middle-aged) Gidget through the whore-scratched glass.

She wanted to introduce herself, establish her legitimacy. She naively thought she could do that by announcing her role as assisting the super, assisting mind you, not helping. She couldn't hear his sotto voce question and answer. How? By sucking his dick? She was delusional, and except for auditory hallucinations, stone deaf.

Johnny knew what Trixie was. Nothing could legitimize her, least of all helping Porko paint.

She exercised what she considered her right to browbeat all the other residents, especially when they were already down and out. Most were....

She attacked Natasha for not taking better care of her dog while it was alive. Natasha never took it for nice long walks, or put its shit in the trash cans with the shovel.

Didn't she know how to use a shovel? Trixie shook the filthy thing in Natasha's tear-stained face. This is what it looks like.

Porko reminded her. He'd told her Natasha and her dog would die here. Now the dog was gone....

He'd not see her for a few days, and they'd begin to smell something. He wouldn't want to go in, so he'd phone the cops. They'd come, he'd let them in. They wouldn't ask a lot of questions. They'd just want to get her out of there, and notify the kin.

He'd been through it before....

It was her....

*****

They did intake....

Substance issues?
None. Honest.
Liar. You did crack last night!
No! Of course not!
Besides, this is a NON-SMOKING apartment.
All right. I'll smoke on the nice patio. (The Airing Court.)
You haven't PATIO PRIVILEGES. The patio is off-limits. To CRACK-HEADS!
But I just told you, I DON"T DO CRACK!!!
DOPE, then.
I can't help feeling. I'm being type-cast.
You're being interviewed. Do you drink?
Water! Only water!
Mixed with hooch!
No, never!
Psychological problems? Anger management issues?
No! No! No!
Girl friend?
No!

How come? Gay?

No! I don't know why....

Was it the beatings?

No, it was something else....

More serious than BEATING? What? You gave her AIDS?

Cock-sucking NAZI BITCH! He was visibly annoyed. He goose-stepped all the way to the door, waking the whole house with his crude satire.

*****

Sam disappeared, then he returned one Friday to say that he still wanted his stuff and that he'd be back next week. He never showed up next week or the week after. When he finally appeared he gave Johnny a line about how he'd been out of work and had a lot of alimony to catch up on. He had a new girlfriend and her son had a warrant out for his arrest. They had to lie low.

After months of delaying tactics he finally came by all weepy-eyed apologizing for his failure to come sooner. Johnny said O.K., they'd sell the stuff he stilled owed them for, and give him a credit for what he'd paid on it....

He came in Saturday night to use up some of his credit. Johnny showed him a copy of the first edition of Elizabeth Custer's Boots and Saddles, a book about her life with the general in the West, published in 1885. Sam said something fatuous about it not saying first edition on the title page, but it was a first edition. Johnny put it back in its safe place in the display case....

Then he got busy with Romeo in the back of the store while Sam looked around, as he usually did. Eventually Sam accumulated a pile at the front of the store. Johnny priced it, applied it against Sam's credit, and put it in plastic bags....

After Sam had gone Johnny looked for the Custer book, but it was gone too....

*****

The truck was two-thirds full of books; the other third was furniture and rubber sex-toys.

Some professor had died in New England, and an auctioneer bought his house with the contents; the whole top floor was books.

To judge by all the copies of the poetry of Alexander Pope, the professor had taught Eighteenth-Century Literature.

Then Johnny started to find copies of every translation of Virgil's GEORGICS in the world....

Interleaved with the GEORGICS, he found a complete set of PENETRATOR NOVELS....

Finally, interleaved with the PENETRATORS, a hard-bound copy of SIZE QUEEN, THE HOMOSEXUAL CLASSIC, full of pictures of naked young men with huge erect penises. Interleaved with the pictures was a rather flaccid narrative of one young man's introduction to sodomy.....

Johnny knew: it was DILDO Wingnut's SECRET STASH!!!

Not that there had ever really any doubt, but for confirmation Johnny also found his old advisor's Ph.D., tightly rolled up in the bottom of one of the boxes. It was exactly 50 years old.

Dildo would have been 75. He hadn't gone into a REST HOME, or he'd have taken his diploma with him....

Noel Noel....

He was DEAD....

Imagine! All these years....

*****

Johnny asked Jack Was Every Inch a (One-Eyed) Sailor if he wanted to put Dildo's diploma on his wall with his sailor's knots and paintings of old wrecks....

He didn't.

Jack Was Every Inch a (One-Eyed) Sailor asked Johnny if he had one.

Johnny had several.

Jack Was Every Inch a (One-Eyed) Sailor pointed out the Latin: salutatem in deo, etc.

Was Johnny's diploma like that? Latin?

Yeah....

What did it mean?

Garbage in, garbage out.

*****

Thing Street Asylum

Johnny met Lesbia Maecenas at J. Zeus Murphy's Zombie Crypt Store at Thing Street and Rancid Vale....

She was getting Porko old manual typewriters to repair.... Her colleagues preferred them....

Porko roamed all over Hogtown with their obsolete hardware strapped to his aching muscular back.... Ethernet cards and adapters for Underwoods, Remingtons, Royals....

Not easy to fix 80-year-old machines.....

Lesbia lived in Citizen Hearse's crumbling 80-story pent-house.... Thing Street's notorious Best Lodge....

Her vacuum-tube stereo took up a whole industrial-look wall....

She said she was hard-up.... She gave Porko twenty bucks....

She was strolling with Max the Butcher.... Discussing Never Had It So Good....

It testified to the nobility of patients' spirits as they soared above the squalid reality of Thing Street and made a life for themselves out of wholesale delusional stuff....

She never went to Johnny's thing store anymore.... Copies of his horrid book stared at her from every flat surface.... So negative....

She hoped Johnny broke his neck carrying her Remington Noiseless into the bower where she typed Sapphics to co-religionists.... Provided he didn't dent it....

It was her ouija board....

Her fingers flew across the keys like Glen Goul's ghostly pinkies, like Norrie Freed's dear departed digits....

If Porko stubbed his bunion while feather dusting she asked it twice daily how the boy was convalescing....

What were the odds for survival? Had infection spread yet? Should they wait, or cut right now. Below the knee? What role had Johnny played in the mishap? Doubtless he'd been implicated....

Johnny innocently said hi, how are yuh....

Her ugly dump was full of mass-produced depression furniture from Johnny's Thing Store, and foreign students who thought it was classy....

She thought so too....

She said how are YOU.... As if HE was ILL....

One afternoon in the thing store.... He reminded her....

Thing Street was home to hookers, pimps, junkies, and other unsorted maniacs....

She was a comfortable bourgeois with a duplex full of foreign students who paid their rent on time with valuable Beijing money.... Pegged to the U.S. dollar....

She couldn't see it....

She thought Thing Street was swell....

*****

Their prehensile hands swept the gutter on hairy gorilla arms as they lurched down Thing Street to the Art Bar. Led by Max.

Another of Crazy Jane's Psycho Tours.

Thing Street Excursion Number.

For 20 bucks Johnny offered to don a straight jacket, drool, empty a chamber pot of his own fresh piss in their fat faces, and put on a REALLY BIG CLOWN-SHOW.

When after a series of rejections he'd lowered his price to 25 cents still without any takers, he decided this tour was the lame corporate version for P/Bigge bankers.

They hadn't come to remove the stigma of mental hellness, but to reinforce it. Only theirs wasn't Jonathan Swift's. It was The Snake Pit and Virgin Cunnieham's....

They weren't interested in Johnny's illustration of the positive symptoms of schizophrenia, or his real low-life welfare hotel where, this very moment, Porko was slipping his superintendent's dick between the heaving thighs of his avid and pneumatic RISING Mental Hell SUPERSTAR, Dr. Trixie Zane RN, Literary Prize-Winning Sex-Worker, Mistress of the Arts, Professor, Radio Star....

They wanted to fit into the neighborhood, to be a PART of it, to TRANSFORM lives. They wore black support hose and washable safari shorts and Tilley pith helmets. They talked about movements, new eras, reasons for hope....

Neurologist, the list went on. Optimist! MOM!!!

Teacher in a school....

The only movement Johnny knew anything about was SHIT, the same old shit, and DESPAIR....

Pioneers of Alienation

Pioneers of Alienation:
Part IV: The Transformations

The so-called TRANSFORMATION[42] was rigged. It followed parameters set by $CAMH and TRIXIE SANE, which they enforced.

Zane set the terms for the phony debate, then changed them when an embarrassing question didn't suit her. Bela was overawed by her. It wasn't every day he got to interview a literary sex-trade worker and COMMUNICATOR OF THE YEAR.

---

[42] In his Annual Report for 1906, Clarke quotes long passages from his own journal (The American Journal of Insanity, of which he had been an editor since 1904), of what originally were after-dinner speeches delivered at his own Asylum (to "members of the Psychological Section of the British Medical Association, and the visiting members of the American Medico-Psychological Association" on the 60th anniversary of the laying of the corner stone) by a roster of hand-picked speakers. While their tenor that "Ontario had done nobly in caring for her insane" (1906, 10), might not have been strictly in accordance with the truth, the particular innovations advocated include the acquisition of some of the recently developed hardware for scientific work, the augmentation of the medical staff, and the freedom of more of that staff from clerical work. But these are minor compared to the ultimate goal, the implementation of what Clarke calls "study of individuals and their treatment" or "the individual method" (1906, 10). This is essential for the transformation of the Asylum from a "well managed poor house" with its "hopeless wrecks stranded in asylum wards" to a "hospital for the insane" (1906, 10).

In the same year Clarke establishes The Bulletin of the Toronto Hospital for the Insane 1.1 (1907), later The Bulletin of the Ontario Hospitals for the Insane, the purpose of which is to improve the status of psychiatry relative to that of general medicine. The editor hopes that his "little periodical" will facilitate "fuller co-operation between the outside medical man and his patients, on the one hand, and the psychiatrist on the other" (4). The journal would feature "clinical pictures of type cases" (5), which would encourage general practitioners to approach their patients as "cases," creating more psychiatric "knowledge." Clarke describes a transformation in the status of the patient:

> [from] a menace to public safety or to his own welfare [to] a sick man ... at daggers drawn with his environment, who can no longer accommodate himself to the requirements of organized society; the victim of a diseased personality -- often accompanied by manifestations of various physical disorders" (4).

Clarke's "individual appraoch" served the psychiatrist too; it transformed the Asylum, and transported psychiatry, with a new and more portable kind of knowledge.

He was anemic. He never drank wine. He was afraid she'd pistol-whip him.

This was political discourse at the Milquetoast Broadcasting Company's STATE TVO. Don't ask too many questions, don't ask any GOOD questions, and if by accident you ask one - don't PRESS it. Pathetic!

There'd never been a cure for mental hellness - call it what you would. There was no indication there ever would be. Historically people who thought they were on the CUSP of a BREAKTHROUGH, or acted like they were, had always been criminals, psychopaths, and mass-murderers....

That was DOCTORS....

So which was the wind-up talking doll? Too hard to call. All of the above....

BELA wanted to know why there wasn't a THING STORE at $CAMH....

*****

Trixie Zane
Those Hakim
Knock-Offs Say It ALL?
Zane Declares - WHAT?
The 4th Reich?!

The past belongs to us....
It was just a long time coming....

*****

Zane and Praetorius:
Psychiatric Hipsters

*****

Trixie Zane
Communicator of Forever

They suffered from DELUSIONS OF GRANDEUR. They spoke in guarded, grandiose terms of The Movement of which they saw themselves MESSIANICALLY as the PIONEERS.

They were RICH. Their Movement for Social Change was led by people making over a hundred thousand annually, some of them many times that.

Why did Constantinople get the works?
That's nobody's business but the Turks....

In the TRANSFORMED SOCIETY they would make a KILLING....

*****

The over-paid Aliens
at Mars Discovery District -
a so-called Incubator
of
Social Change....

Trixie and Praetorius were schizophrenic, paranoid subtype. No insight! They believed the rest of society were troglodytes determined to DESTROY them, when nobody had even heard of them till a few years ago when they started RAVING.

Everyone's CRAZY! The sky's FALLING! Send MONEY!

Pioneers of Alienation

They withdrew into the media bubble created by Citizen Hearse, Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre and their communications department.

They were Svengalis. Talking to themselves. Again? When had they ever stopped?

In their narcissism they awarded themselves prizes. Trixie became Communicator of the Year.

They believed their own propaganda, always the sign of a regime collapsing into MADNESS. Then, in a vicious circle, their PR was increasingly about their PR. They didn't talk about programs, they talked about ad campaigns ABOUT programs.

Finally they couldn't see history, not even their own recent history, except as a series of increasingly ridiculous and solipsistic phrases. Advertising slogans! Transforming wives, part of the neighborhood, you've changed, new kind of hospital, defeat denial, catalytic event, new era for Mental Hell, etc..., etc....

The long history of patients, clients, doctors and hardware salesmen at Thing Street was totally elided. There was nothing between them and the Lunatic Asylum of 1850. They took credit for change, called it a transformation, and reversed it.

The past belonged to them....

They would bring it back. They would revive Mental Hygiene and reverse the Falls of Dementia creating a new inland sea.

They needed to.

They were coelacanths....

Been a long time gone....

O Constantinpole!

*****

What was so-called One Brave Night?

It was a scam, a witless repitition of last year's disgusting FIRST EVER ALL-NIGHT CHALLENGE TO DEFEAT MENTAL HELLNESS.

Obviously that one hadn't worked, or raised enough money either. Nothing could have worked, and there was no such word as ENOUGH in $CAMH's vocabulary. So there they went again....

The premise was that The Mentally Hell were pathetic wretches suffering all night in lonely Thing Street garrets.

Like Johnny?! High atop Emile Durkheim's Twinned Tower....

Trixie Zane and Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre and all that ilk would express their LOVE for The Mentally Hell, imitating them by staying up all night in a Thing Street hipster bar and soliciting donations for it.

Their LOVE?!

For JOHNNY?!

It was a Marathon for Madness, not unlike the old St. Vitus dance craze. Wouldn't that make everybody feel better, just thinking about it? Not so ALL ALONE?

It was hard to imagine stupider stuff. It was insulting (and stigmatizing) in its caricature of mentally hell people, in its transparently phony combination of pathos and self-interested greed, and in its sheer silliness.

Evidently they had a communications department that got paid millions of dollars to write this drivel.

Where did they get their (mis)information?

Butch! They should have fired that fucker!

People living with mental hellness tell us, they said.

They obviously did a Sean the Kidd-type survey of INCLUSIVE SPACES. The Porkdale Library, the Sun Fa, the Gladstone House, the Flake? How about Emile Durkheim House and the Twin Towers?

All Butch's haunts!

Butch waddled busily up and down Thing Street telling tales. The Gossip on a Boulevard of Snitches. How he (almost) had cancer. How his father (almost) committed suicide. He was Trixie's mental hell poster-pig.

He was a fat pig. He squatted on Praetorius's fanbacks on the sidewalk in front of the store. He left his foul stench on them. He didn't wear underpants or change his jeans and he never wiped his ass. He knew what he was doing. He was annointing them.

Customers scurried past him to enter the Thing Store and complain to Romeo about the fat slob outside. He was bad for business but so was Romeo who had early onset dementia.

Butch considered himself a special kind of mental health advocate. Meaning he advocated for disease, making disorders worse for personal gain. He was a bully, for all that not unlike all the other mental health advocates who screamed like mad about removing stigma while stigmatizing everybody worse than ever just for being alive. That was

all that was required to have a mental hellness at for fund-raising purposes. Being alive. Then one had to be sympathetic and give him money, as a fellow lunatic needing the cure immediately or he'd escalate.

Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre ran into someone in one of those stupid $20 purple change agent T-shirts on White Squirrel Way. Butch!

They experienced one of those amazing chance encounters with humanity that Trixie was always raving about in public. Butch was somewhat stoned on $CAMH sponsored LABATT ICE when Vixen Foxy ran him over with Trixie's Isotta Fraschinni. She knew there were no SPEED BUMPS on White Squarrel Way. It was a $CAMH patrolled WAY, as they liked to say. She knew there were no squirrels either (they being somewhat rarer than coelacanths). What she ran over felt too big even under her enormous mag wheels. She stepped gingerly from the cab, taking her Luger with her in case it was Johnny she'd flattened and he was still alive.

It was MENTAL HELLNESS....

*****

It was Dr Praetorius's greatest scheme yet!

Dr Praetorius would tell you that psychiatry was a science and that contrary to the spurious lies that were told about them, shrinks were not overreliant on drugs. Their patients were STONERS!

Then he'd solicit your sympathy because every time one of his patients suicided he felt just TERRIBLE!

Then he'd ask for a donation.

Doc Praetorius – Confidence Man!

He was writing a book....

With Butch!

How he re-invented himself as....

The New Age Nosferatu....

Dr Rat Brain![43]

*****

If you thought of Thing West as a big gut, the mouth was Scamaitch Psychiatry in their compound at Ozztown, and Porc was THE END. It looked and felt somewhat like a ski-lodge in permanent ruinous foreclosure. It had lost its slopes after the last ice age, and none of its members knew how to ski anyway. Activity-recreation stood for something else. Obviously it was an expensive operation, given to pimping itself with slogans like and including BUILDING LIVES. That must have meant the social workers. Johnny got tired of walking over the bodies on the steps next door, after 10 years the same bodies. Maybe they mean the building lived? The steps? The Edwardian attributes? The place stank of co-opted politics.

Lately there'd been meetings about the accelerating redevelopment of the neighborhood, like Scotchtan suddenly just noticed. This was placebo politics, co-opted politics, patsy politics. All of the workers were afflicted with it, and it definitely added to the character of the place. The fecklessness. Even the young workers - Heinz 57 for example - resembled old-fashioned hippie activists whose activism was so dated - and irrelevant - they themselves had forgotten what it was. It was Harris - er Ford - er - you know – whoever was premier now. Let's impeach him! Let's haul him before an International Tribunal! They could hold it in one of those nicely renovated meeting rooms, right upstairs.

*****

[43] One of Clarke's "occupational wanderers," Mr. Alger voluntarily admitted himself on November 18, 1911, after a period of hardship and itineracy that brought him from Toronto to Montreal and back. He had finally been hospitalized with T.B., but had left the sanatorium rather than undergo an operation. At the Asylum he was diagnosed as "an incipient case of catatonic dementia praecox, probably induced by physical condition." He finally died of tuberculosis in 1914.

Among his papers he left behind two related essays. The first, entitled "Our Medical Staff," describes some of the Asylum doctors, just before the outbreak of World War I. In Mr. Alger's depiction, they are rather remote individuals, too wrapped up in themselves to notice their idiosyncrasies (let alone Mr. Alger's). The opinions of the superintendent, at this time Dr. J.M. Forster, carry more weight in the Asylum world than Teddy Roosevelt's in the real one; but they are bromides about "fresh air" and "mental and physical hygiene," whose only effect is to make flies scarce and fresh air plentiful in his office. Dr. Clare, his assistant, is the "chief of works, chief lever-puller, and major-domo"; Mr. Alger remarks the "abysmal profundity of his lectures in psychiatry," but that most of the patients liked him -- a heavy man, fond of laughter, good-natured and boring. The first assistant physician, however, was a "great dispenser" of smiles, a lady's man with an annoying habit of looking at his bank book. The main thing he noticed about the pathologist were his "lovely teeth," which unfortunately went with "biting" remarks. He was unpopular with the stenographers, who found him "pedantic and dogmatic on occasions."

Pioneers of Alienation

The Curse of Mental Health was $CAMH Psychiatry. They raised hundreds of millions of dollars for bad drugs and worse hardware - and now for supercomputers for Artificialintelligence for Dr Rat Brain to prevent schizophrenics with over at Krembil Neuroinformatics. He could finally get rid of that C64. Or was it a T80?

While Dr Rat Brain seeks to cure you by replacing schizophrenics with artificial intelligence that can't go mad, while $CAMH CEO Trixie Zane brain-washes a hand-picked audience of ignorant cheerleading change agents there's every reason for hope (for robots?), $CAMH Foundation CEO Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre mugs you on White Squirrel Way like an evil wayward path angel and your Mental Health nurse drinks your pin money on One Brave Night - but it's a beautiful day in The Compound, Queen West Ossington, Sudbury, Parkdale Toronto, in the streets of Toronto, in the Condos by the train tracks - for some hats-on-for-awareness transforming-lives shit!

*****

One Brave Night at $CAMH Foundation they elected $CAMH CEO Trixie Zane the IABC Trash Talking Doll of the Year!

Who were they?

Public Relations hacks!

How many were they?

FOUR!

That was what Johnny called a $CAMH UNDERSTANDING!

A Fake Fraudulent Fundraiser!

Welcome to Mental Hell Month!

*****

The Curse of Mental Health was CAMH Psychiatry. There was even a $CAMH understanding between CEO Trixie Zane and Dear Leader Kim Jong Un. The latter didn't even know but that didn't matter. To Trixie it was real. They both lived high with a few party-members in their respective compounds, tyrannizing a captive population for the sake of their money-grubbing cult. They both fancied themselves hipsters and while politically somewhat left of centre, they harbored a secret love for Prince Harry, the sudden loss of whose mother in a crash like a million flashes firing, made him not only a mental health advocate, but an expert too. They both also invested huge sums in hardware and the propaganda that said it worked so was a good investment as opposed to the total waste of money on guaranteed mass destruction it really was. Shoot the moon, bitch. The earth was shot full of holes already.

*****

The COMMUNCICATIONS DEPARTMENT of the Casino for Affliction and Mental Hell ($CAMH) cost hundreds of thousands of dollars annually.

They were worthless hacks....

WORSE than Burch!

BAD!

*****

Trixie on State TVO's
Bela Hireling Show!
How She Got to be
Communicator of Forever:
Cure for Mental Hellness?
DODGE the QUESTION!
Trixie Zane,
Our IABC Chatty Cathy
with Bela Hireling of TV Souwesthole
CURE for Mental Hellness?
See me NEXT year....

*****

Trixie's SUICIDE EXTORTION PROGRAM!

Thing Street Asylum

Z(appy) Jeff Daskalaskis and Kwame McKenzie exploited the Germanwings Disaster. Depression! Suicide and mass murder! For Repetitive Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation at the Temerty Centre! What? No antidepressants?!

Hey, Trixie! Psychiatric Illness! Stigma! Why wasn't she exploiting this? Was it because the TREATMENT didn't work?! And what WAS the treatment? Antidepressants?!

The picture showed the headquarters of the psychiatric drug cartel on Thing Street, Porkdale, Hogtown. Jah Lo See drew it. She said it was the LOUVRE....

Full of FAKES!

SCAMH (State Capitalists Advancing Mental Hell / Shopping Centres and Model Homes)! The highly stigmatizing and conflicted psychiatric criminal organization....

Under Trixie Zane it became a lying media construct. Notorious for false fundraising claims about being on the cusp of delusional breakthroughs.

They exploited everything, as long as it was a moneymaker.

Did he think they wouldn't exploit him too? Really?

Yes, there really was an Eli Lilly Training Centre at SCAMH!

FLIGHT Training Centre....

In a Cessna....

They started to spin it, appointing one of their point-man shrinks to talk about stigma - not the issue - even to talk about it the wrong way.

In a TALE spin....

Trixie believed in TELLING TALES, but she called them STORIES....

Did stigma include taking some kinds of mental illness seriously enough not to let someone afflicted into the cockpit of a jet?

Did fear of stigmatising contribute to the disaster, by discouraging some quack from reporting Lubitz?

Had fear of being stigmatizing led some people not to take some kinds of mental illness seriously enough?

He thought so - but it wasn't to him the main issue, about which the authorities had been typically reticent - antidepressants! and their role in mood changes, violence, suicide and murder.

SCAMH fired David Healy merely for raising the issue, for fear of offending a big donor. Ell Lilly! They were on the take....

Meanwhile psychiatric pointman Daskalakis and State TVO Agenda Posterboy Kwame McKenzie pimped their gadgets (rTMS and personalized medicine) while ignoring Antidepressants and Suicidality....

If Antidepressants were the elephant, Eli Lilly was the monkey in this room.

Their collaborative effort was to science what smegma was to Camembert.

They could co-host a talk show. They did!

With Elvira!

*****

One Brave Night a little something from $CAMH Style Councillor and Social Cause of Poverty Schizophrenia and Ennui etc., Kwame McKenzie.

From $CAMH Foundation and the Wellesley Institute to YOU - you dumb pauper!

May your Mental Hell be SAFE forever - in a world that's SAFE for it.

North Korea?

*****

The Curse of Mental Health was $CAMH Psychiatry. Phrases from rocketry went off in Trixie's advertising like farts. Which phrases from quack science psycho-pathologized the Dear Leader's enemies was classified, but mental health awareness was definitely a euphemism for brain-washed. She spoke of a new trajectory for mental hell the rocket fuel for which was money. Instead of talking about biggest breakthroughs ever, now she went wild over moonshots to some delusional paradise. Beyond the moon became the new Fresh Air Zone.

Beyond the moon?! What about her shitholes? Not just on Thing Street but "across the lifespan and around the world?"

That was haters talking. Trixie was transforming live ones.

*****

Trixie Zane's 3,000 FACES of MENTAL HELL!

So many, none of them was real. She was EVE in one of those BAD MOVIES her friend McKENZIE discussed with BELA HIRELING on STATE TVO.

She was MADAME SATAN....

She certainly wasn't Daisy Clover....

She was a MEDIA CONSTRUCT (why the IABC gave her a PRIZE) - and nobody knew what else, whether animal or mineral, hard science or science-fiction, male or female....

They were just facets of the endlessly revolving door, engine of her multiplying personalities....

You can call me TRIXIE, she said. Why not ST/EVE? Why NOT?!

The saintly-caring TRIXIE!

She spewed misleading bromides and called them CATALYTIC CONVERSATIONS.

So what if EVERYTHING she said was FALSE - it COULDN'T BE because she got a PRIZE! But what if the IABC was LYING? All FOUR of them!

The EMPEROR was NAKED....

There was no particular reason to be hopeful....

Because they weren't really ON THE CUSP OF A BREAKTHROUGH....

It was just the spin she put on her inordinate love of drugs and hardware at $CAMH. She could have opened a COSTCO. They should have.

Workman did....

They'd come full circle. From leg irons to brain stimulators on Thing Street. Only the advertising got better.

Spinning? Story-telling? He knew, Trixie or St/Eve - her name was lesion. Weren't they all just names for LIEING?

*****

Suddenly it came to him. Like a Rube Goldberg epiphany. Transforming WIVES?! Of course! Trixie Zane was a FAILED TRANNY!

Having spent years mocking the public persona of SCAMH's Communicator of the Century, Thing Street Crusader, and Woman of Action ©, Johnny felt he'd become acquainted with certain facets of her public persona. In a word, her SOUL!

All these years he'd been denying its transgenderedness! While there was nothing odd to him about transgenderedness per se, there was definitely something off-key - dissonant - or just plain weird - about Trixie's version of it. Because all other available information about Trixie indicated she was painfully ordinary. The fascist public relations firm that pimped her could not have invented her profile out of nothing.

Neurologist, optimst - TRANSEXUAL!

She was a REAL MOTHER for you! Her strapping male offspring Mikey and Billie attended Upper Boystown Seminary. They made VARSITY. They showed up drunk for Trixie's TOWNHALL and trashed the Women's Room after pissing in the sink during intermission. Their bad breath was from stale pizza stuck between rotting teeth. They popped percosets for tooth-ache but Trixie told the press they argued with the dentist every time he gave them tylenol. It was too strong! They'd get addicted!

Whether these louts really made Trixie normal or not was beside the point - they were adopted or rented from Vixen's Renta-Mental Speakers' Bureau. She'd had a bastard by Praetorius that nobody heard about. The kid was up for adoption but she kept preventing it. She wanted to give him a mother's love, and he was a moneymaker. He was the goods on Praetorius.

Warfarin Boy! Porko!

So she regaled them with crap about Mike and Billie - to look normal. Like Trixie SANE!

But she looked weird! The fascists depicted her with black glasses several pounds too heavy for her wasted face, with a huge calabash under a ragged pagepoy haircut, and a wide industrial-strength leather belt that had been yanked off a Massive harvesting machine. Her dresses could have been designed by Edith Head, circa 1930, for Queen Mary but were actually designed by Hugo Boss for the Wagner girls....

Butch! So what happened?

The geniuses in the various PR departments and firms she relied on to spin her image (Dentsu, Dentsubos, SCAMH Foundation, SCAMH Communications, etc. (to name just a few that didn't nearly account for the gross amount of money the Ministry of Lotteries Asylums and Casinos wasted on what they euphemistically called SCAMH understanding) had literally out-foxed themselves and spun her like a top.

Like the fly wheel on a DADANIAN PACIFIER LOCOMOTIVE....

Yes, they had transformed Trixie into a tranny - but ambiguously - so no one knew for sure even which way she went - whether man to woman or woman to man - or other to other, etc. They had spun her to a gravy, to a blur. Given the public vertigo - nausea. She was suspended.

Why? Because there was really nothing to Trixie. Besides spin, that is. So they determined - perhaps on the instinctual level, since they weren't very bright - to make everyone pay more attention to her wacky constructedness, than to her non-existent message - her (sane) emptiness.

They deliberately transformed Trixie into a FREAK of constructedness, so the public would ignore everything she said - and didn't say - and feel sorry for her.

They didn't. They noticed. One makes nothing out of nothing.

*****

The REAL Chatty.... A Series of CATALYTIC CONVERSATIONS!

Whatever happened to Trixie Zane?!

Trixie Zane's CATALYTIC Fund-Raising Event....

Trixie Zane's LOUSY TED TRASH TALK.....

It was a bad communication. It exploited various rhetorical fallacies (appeals to emotion, inadequate samples, false generalizations, etc) to mislead the public about Mental Hell.

It was disgraceful, so numerous organizations awarded Trixie prizes for this and similar travesties. Enormous trophies she could bathe in. The IABC, Upper Dadania College, the University of Southwesthole - even the Order of Dadania. So what? The Emperor was NUDE!

He remembered the bowl-and-pitcher set on the commode in the store on Thing Street, with a window full of useless, rusted toys. He'd rapped the rim with his finger.

$CAMH Rings True!

Bruce had chided him. Nobody did that anymore! It actually sounded rather flat. Leaving they'd spotted another, and another - just like it....

Fakes!

*****

Sing this while you spell....

Detect! Denounce! Destroy!

Trixie Zane and Doc Praetorius did a TRASH TALK TRADE-SHOW called WE ARE ALL MENTALLY HELL.

In a medically induced catatonic trance, they predicted that three of the audience would grow up to be schizophrenic.

Johnny figured in a world of diminished expectations, it was no longer realistic to expect to be President.

He wouldn't have made GRAND VIZIER.

There was murmuring in the gallery.

Young men, sporting tan-colored coats and shiny black boots, loitered under the balcony, shaded from Hydro....

Butch....

They believed Zane and Praetorius were MAD. Who ELSE?

It could have been anyone. It was non-evidence, faith-based MENTAL HELL.

Anti-psychotic and schizo-mimetic.

Nobody got cured. There wasn't even a diagnosis. Just belief.

Pioneers of Alienation

When they were asked to take so much - merely on BELIEF, on FAITH - and that some MOUNTEBANK'S SUPERSTITION (somebody who couldn't sell a used car, let alone an ideology - or a taxonomy) - some HARDWARE SALESMAN'S BIO-PHARMACOLOGICAL notion of THE BRAIN - then it wasn't really an EVIDENCE-BASED HOSPITAL any more - it was A NEW KIND OF HOSPITAL (as they were so fond of repeating) - a BAD FAITH MEDICAL ARCADE....

$CAMH....

A CULT BOZO CLOWN SHOW....

His tonsured monastical crown....

The remainder of TRIXIE SANE's highly stigmatizing (three of you are going to get schizophrenia?!) and emotionally manipulative TRASH TALK (with tear-jerking poster people and several Alpo-San POMERANIAN COMFORT DOGS for pathos) was only too discoverable on-line.

In North Korea, it became a HIT with the DEAR LEADER.

Johnny never realized that a prize-winning communicator could be so stupid and unscrupulous. The runner-ups?

Stalin? Hitler? Grand Vizier Alapaloozah after more than a few too many at Granny's Pro Shoppe?

Across the lifespan and around the world....

*****

Johnny Could GiveSTUPID TED TALKS, like hers but not hers.

He couldn't doWORSE and he was FUNNIER! that is, QUEER....

They were all MENTALLY HELL?! All SCAMH CLIENTS?!

But, NO! He feebly protested. Not legally! Not REALLY!

Did he think $CAMH gave a fuck about the law except when it suited them?! When he dissed them, it suited. Especially when he had reasons. They understandably disowned him.

Otherwise, $CAMH insisted via Dear Leader Trixie Zane (their Nuanced Crusader) he was mentally HELL, he was their client and they were his shrink. So what, if they hadn't even met him. That's the way they liked it.

Hard to see a shrink? Soon he'd never see anyone above the security guard - only to show him the door. Trixie Zane would assess him in a Ted Talk, label him schizophrenic, and send Deane over with two beefy cops and a Community Treatment Order.

He could complain to the Deflowerment Council, but they'd dismiss him because he wasn't really a client - even though their Dear Leader called him crazy and labeled him schizophrenic. It all depended how he interpreted her statement that three of you will probably be schizophrenic. So far as he knew, it was just him and the cat watching. There must have been at least one more....

Strange, however, that they no longer called themselves the $CAMH Patients' Council, but the Deflowerment Council - meaning everyone's Deflowerment Council, even Johnny's - but, like the rest of $CAMH, only when it suited THEM.

That was the $CAMH ethos. Ridiculous as their Dear Leader's language was, and though it totally failed to tell anyone anything real about Mental Hell, it indicated plenty about the ethos of $CAMH.

They were militant totalitarian fascists at war with humanity, with Human Nature - which they deeply detested and sought not merely to transform but to eradicate.

They had genocide in their hearts, which they revealed through fissures in their discourse.

(Stuff it! Cram it!)

Trixie raved about removing barriers while labeling Johnny schizophrenic, placing him beyond the pale of humanity (take a good look at her notorious Ted Talk - for which she got an Ordure of Dadania) - with Adolf Hitler and Joe Mengele! And Albert Schweitzer playing his organ! - more than the old analogue walls ever could.

So they elevated Trixie Zane to the status of Mental Hell Fuhrer - even, it seemed, inventing organizations whose sole purpose was to legitimize her disgustingness - Woman of Action, Communicator of the Year, Nuanced Crusader - even Officer of the Ordure of Dadania! Her nothingness infected everything she touched (worst of all the english language).

She was worse than Marie Curie!

She was cancer! She gave Johnny PLAGUE! She was immune to it herself....

Of course, Trixie had her followers. Why not? Charles Manson had Squeaky Fromm. Trixie Zane had Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre and any number of corporate, former hippie, ex-Trotskyite, retired boomer clients just like her - Squeaky was motivated by pleasure; they were motivated by greed.

Thing Street Asylum

She was Eva Peron. Dr Praetorius was her General but she ruled $CAMH through the fake charity of her Foundation....

Trixie had plenty of client clients - patient followers (pets). In a harsher context, they were called CAPOS. Their function remained the same. To be quislings. To co-opt criticism and resistance to her increasingly totalitarian practices.

She made smoking a cigarette more criminal than crack cocaine. Joints were fine too. She was a Viper!

She tore down the Asylum and replaced it with The New Gateway Flamingo, Headquarters of her New Age Drug Cartel.

Trixie's sometimes strange notion of understanding, sustainability, and systems leadership....

Weren't drugs a renewable resource?

For that matter, wasn't sex?

Meanwhile she transformed the loco clinic into a CTO (Community Treatment Order) Fulfillment Centre, STALAG for INTENSIVES - the future of Thing Street Clinic!

It was the hypodermic equivalent of a burger franchise, the buns being the asses of the clients - where they (usually) got their injections.

That SWEET SPOT....

It was indeed somewhat intensive. Trixie had Vixen Foxy and the Communications Department partner with a leading fascist advertising firm to invent a suitable euphemism.

Recalcitrant would have been too obvious.

Reluctant? Better! It connoted modesty yielding to compliance - surrender!

However, intensive covered everything from the initial stubborn perversity that made injection necessary to the sensation of the injection itself. It was more aesthetically pleasing. Poets were said to be INTENSIVE.

They wrote POEMFORTHEDAY....

It's easy to sing as saying your A B C's....

Unlike shouting slogans from posters plastered on doors and windows while meanwhile, in the real world, patients went to Mental HELL on cocktails of legal and illegal drugs - from the sale of ALL of which they ($CAMH) got a significant cut none of which made its way back to the street but straight to self-righteous cons who squatted at antique boardroom tables in so-called incubators (like and including Mars Discovery District) and gang-fucked.

But hey, the aptly named CAPPOni SISTERS (one of whom had died recently - the GENIUS who invented CLEAN AIR AMBASSADORS - good riddance!) worked for $CAMH! So it must have been all right!

But it wasn't. It was the quintessential evil - a black hole in reality, nothing. The more they constructed themselves in media, the more they cried CURE! like that other doomed fool who cried WOLF - or was it FIRE?! - the more Trixie spouted bromides instead of telling them the truth - the more obvious their nothingness became.

Watch out though, if they ever really got THE CURE. They wouldn't even know, because they'd be NOTHING too - they'd be DEAD. That was the cure they'd been hovering dangerously on the cusp of for decades.

Watch out for it! The BIG BREAKTHROUGH![44]

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[44] They'd some before, if their perfervid language was any indication, or at least they thought they had. In 1914 Clarke began what he called in "The Defective Immigrant," Public Health Journal 7 (November, 1916): 462-5) his "special survey of the defectives in the community of Toronto" ("The Defective Immigrant," (462)), at his clinic run out of the Social Service Department of the Toronto General Hospital. The clinic shared what Clarke considered, in "The Story of the Toronto General Hospital Psychiatric Clinic," Canadian Journal of Mental Hygiene 1.1 (1919): 30-37, the legitimate goals of any Social Service Department, "discovering the defectives in a community and providing proper care and treatment of them" (31). It proved "a gold mine" (31) of "feeble-minded children," "defectives" and weaklings from the "slum centres" of Britain but now "transplanted to the virgin soil of a new world" ("The Defective Immigrant," 463), many of them wi th the symptoms of dementia praecox. It was "imperative" that clinics like his be established in every community with 10,000 or more people and that "travelling clinics" be created to visit smaller all smaller communities. Each new clinic creates new information, new "Surveys," for "accomplishing true reforms and gathering facts with which to convince the general public" -- to fund more clinics ("The Story of the Toronto General Hospital Psychiatric Clinic," 33). Clarke's assistant, Dr. C.M. Hincks, founder of the Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene, seems unable to contain his joy:

> Toronto is roused at last! The terrible menace of the feeble-minded has shocked the community.... Whence has come the dynamic power bringing about such an upheaval of public opinion? Many forces have been at work, but chief among these has been the Psychiatric Clinic....

Dr. C.K. Clarke stated that 54 per cent of the defectives examined at the clinic were of foreign birth. The newspapers published these startling statements and Toronto was convinced that the problem needed immediate solution. (33-34)

In "Juvenile Delinquency and Mental Defect," Clarke observes that the Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene has carried its investigations into areas that have generally been avoided or ignored by the government. Previously, only those he characterizes as "amateur social reformers" have explored this "terra incognita" better left to professionals like himself. It was a new jurisdiction for his profession -- but like the Byzantium to which Clarke's language continually alludes, it was largely a myth.

Pioneers of Alienation

*****

How About ILSA?!

Her latest $CAMH moneymaker was typically gross and disgusting. It ultimately promised to cure schizophrenia with a $500 donation. That was what the BIGGEST BREAKTHROUGH EVER was supposed to have done - LAST YEAR!

Well, to paraphrase CEO Trixie Zane, DON'T see me NEXT YEAR.

Johnny wouldn't be waiting, since as everybody ought to have known, it was impossible to cure a verbal construct.

Her campaign was characteristically one-sided and opaque, like being solicited by Alapaloozah on behalf of yet another 5-year plan.

The moneygrubbing wing of $CAMH was such a totalitarian outfit, staffed entirely by brain-disease(d) party-members led by the sycophantic Moneygrubber-in-Chief, Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre.

Those years in business, whoring for her émigré pianist sure paid off!

She'd risen through the rank, sunk through the stink - depending on one's perspective, it stank the same. She exploited phrases like (and including) understanding, sustainability and systems leadership.

Don't forget equity lens! Environmental scan! Nothing in it for through the jigs....

They were all stupid niggers now....

BELIEVERS!

The transforners were uncharacteristically guarded about just what it was they wanted Johnny to do THIS time (besides send money) - as if they feared he'd mock them.

They positively refused to divulge any hard information before he told them his blood-type and made a minimum $25 donation.

However, it appeared to involve staying up all night to cure schizophrenia, which confirmed his suspicion that it was a dance marathon.

For tardive dyskinesia....

People paid you to stay awake, or to go to sleep - or to jitterbug.

Johnny already got paid to stay awake many nights in group-homes and shelters teaming with schizophrenics.

Oak Ridge, Yucca Flats, Ground Zero....

Nobody got cured.

DON'T see me EVER!

*****

Comics section....

He wondered what Mental Hell Matters was all about, since the one thing that really mattered, they did NOT discuss.....

It was like that other bad movie McKenzie ought to have watched some night at Bela's, after they've had some blow.

All about ST/EVE....

About eveyone else, because ST/EVE was a media construct....

*****

I'm PRETTY!

I think you are incredibly fortunate to have Kwame McKenzie as new CEO of the Wellesley Institute. It wasn't easy to find a suitably remunerative research job in this mean provincial town, but you persevered and the result was worth it for Kwame. How deliciously ironic that your squalor shall be studied by one so media friendly, slick and stylish. Surely it will help you to endure your poverty, just knowing that Kwame McKenzie is researching it, from his plantation in Lindsay.

Kiss me,
Kwame McKenzie.

He didn't know which was the sun or the moon....

*****

TRIXIE SANE?!
Really all about $CAMH
Because $CAMH was everywhere....
Bela already worked for them. Now The Swami was working for them, too.
Johnny looked at the contents of their tweets - and there, sandwiched between the usual bromides, IT was... RESILIENCE!

Now presumably resilience ALSO meant doing it on your own - but that rather left $CAMH out in the cold, didn't it?
They couldn't make MONEY if people really started doing it on their own.
So they had to be ingenious, and co-opt doing it on your own by identifying with it and monopolizing it as a virtually patented $CAMH treatment - even writing text books for it, and pimping them too with Bela on Mental Hell MATTERS, along with their other sugar pills.
Here, let us HELP you do it on your own (for a small fee).
Depend on $CAMH to make you resilient, self-reliant, and FREE ([COCK]SUCKERS!)!

*****

Bela's Side-Kick the SWAMI finally confessed. BELIEVE IT!
He was (not) very resilient....

*****

WANTED! for HIJACKING Mental Hell!

With the collaboration of Citizen Hearse's MILQUETOAST BROADCASTING COMPANY'S STATE TVO, $CAMH HIJACKED REAL DEBATE about Mental Hell and turned it into a CELEBRATION of their BIOLOGICAL, PHARMACEUTIC, BRAIN-DISEASE AGENDA.
C. Lamprini Eel's DREAM COME TRUE....
A Traveling Mental Minstrel Clown Show....
First stop, MENTAL HYGIENE.
Their Mental Hell MATTERS Air Show was a CONTRADICTION in TERMS, since the ITINERARY was IMMATERIAL.

Fascist State TVO made STUPID PROGRAMS. They ALWAYS BOMBED.

BLUE SKIES! but it was the LANDING that COUNTED!

$CAMH scientists earning well over 100 thousand annually babbled about green SPACE that was ALL IN THE BRAIN while their supporters responded with psychobabble about walking BEARFOOT because they couldn't spell.

But they sure could FLYYYYY....

Let's see if you can sing....

*****

Dr. Praetorius, great man and visionary part of the neighborhood that he was, got POLYPS and immediately communicated the fact to his sycophants, anticipating the day when the SCHIZOPHRENIA of ordinary mortals would be treated just like one of his POLYPS.
Different strokes for different folks - and POLYPS.
However, as far as $CAMH was concerned, SCHIZOPHRENIA was ALREADY CANCER, the big MONEY-MAKER that COULDN'T be BEAT....
Nobody seemed to know what it was.... CEO of $CAMH....

Uncle $CAMH "looked forward to the day" - why not TODAY, right NOW?! - when SCHIZOPHRENIC would be the same as BLACK or GAY - or JEWISH?!

Like YOU but NOT you - OLD POLYPS - that would be asking too much, he meant....

Your TREATment, or MINE?

*****

Texts preserved in the Archives of Ontario[45] indicate the close relationship the Reception Hospital was to have had with the Toronto Asylum, and the conditions that contributed to its early closure.

It is evident from these that, while Clarke and others exploited the Reception Hospital as they had the Asylum earlier, its purpose -- unclear and contradictory as it was -- was still different from the clinic's Clarke had in mind. At least a part of the problem seems to have been accommodating low and middle-class patients under the same roof, or indeed, in the same room.

While accommodating together the different disorders that afflicted the patients was hard enough, accommodating different classes was what really upset the officials:

> About one half the patients coming into this Hospital are women and men from good families, who have been accustomed to lives of refinement. In the Reception Hospital we have treated many women from the best homes in Toronto, and the purpose of my letter is to draw your attention to the almost impossible situation where we are compelled to recommend the Hospital to good, clean living, decent people, when we are admitting to the same room patients who will use the same bathroom and the same closet, and who are suffering from contagious diseases, such as, Syphilis, Gonorrhoea, Tuberculosis, Scabies, and all other forms of skin diseases.
>
> (Dr. Harvey Clare to Inspector W.W. Dunlop of January 15, 1918)

*****

The Great TRANSFORMER and his TRANSFORMEES!

Anti-psychiatry? You COULD say that.... NO Mad PRIDE WITHOUT IT!

*****

Uncle Polyps addresssed Mad Nation on WHITE SQUIRREL WAY.

WHITE SQUIRREL NATION?!

There were WORSE CROOKS at $CAMH.....

*****

C.K. (Cold Killuh) CLARKE, God Father of CANADIAN PSYCHIATRY, Eugenicist, Mental Hygienist, Proto-NAZI, hated "feeble-minded" women and defective immigrants....

C.B. (Clarence the Bagman - FAROUT) FARRAR, didn't like JEWS either, especially FREUD....

Aldwyn STOKES, a nobody but a GREAT MAN because he "carried on the TRADITION" and he was ONE of THEM, so they named a STREET after him, because WHITE SQUIRREL was TAKEN and FREEDOM STREET had been discarded....

Robin HUNTER was a LOOKER, and, according to Dr Stan Freeman, in a recent HAGIOGRAPHY of the CLARKE INSTITUE MOB: as we all sat at what always looked like the Last Supper (?!) there was no question who JESUS was (p 73) - or BUGSY SEGAL!

Fred "FINGERS" LOWY, "fingered" OLIVIERI in the deferiprone APOTEX affair....

Vivian RAKOFF, diagnosed LUCIEN BOUCHARD (remember?) with NARCISSISTIC PERSONALITY DISORDER, without EVER having MET the man for a psychiatric assessment....

Dr. PRAETORIUS, Old Polyps, our UNCLE $CAMH, fired David HEALY for criticizing PROZAC, destroyed the Queen West hospital and replaced it with Commerical Retail Space, a combination drugstore, condo complex, casino, conference centre and media construct - decorated by Vixen Foxy herself with BIG DONOR advertisements for DRUGS and BOOZE (Eli Lilly Centre, Beamish Wing, LaBatt Wing, Bell Gateway Building) etc., etc....

Of course, his consort was Trixie Zane - whom we've met....

[45] Provincial Secretary's Correspondence, RG 8-5, W.D. McPherson Files 1916-1919, Letter from Dr. Harvey Clare to Inspector W.W. Dunlop of January 15, 1918, Container 100, Toronto Hospital for the Insane, Reception Hospital Folder.

Thing Street Asylum

*****

So What if ALAPALOOZAH WAS a JUNKIE? He FIT RIGHT IN with MANAGEMENT....

From ALAPALOOZAH BASHING to CLIENT DISSING.... Not far!

But the ALAPALOOZAH bashing continued apace. If he'd been one of THEM - they'd have TRANSFORMED him into a $CAMH Afflictions poster-boy. Instead, they accused him of making statements that (they said) one wouldn't be surprised to hear spouting from the mouths of $CAMH inpatients on THING STREET.

The Leftists hated Alapaloozah so much they let down their guard. They usually pretended to like crazy people.

Johnny wondered if the things he WROTE were in the same category as the things Alapaloozah SAID.

He felt a sudden warmth for the Great Man. He loved BIG BROTHER!

He wanted to SLAP that writer. Pummel him with his fists. Sit on his face and FART. So now ALAPALOOZAH was mentally ill, as well as addicted? And STILL no EMPATHY - and what a callous way of talking about $CAMH clients. Like Johnny, if not exactly Johnny himself....

Not to mention, they were stupid and illogical - INPATIENTS? on THING STREET?! Not for very long....

With LEFTIES like THESE - MAD PEOPLE didn't need ENEMIES....

Getting rid of ALAPALOOZAH was no improvement for Johnny. He wanted a NEW OPPOSITION TOO!

He wanted to GET RID OF THE TOTALITARIAN FASCIST LEFT. It had been co-opted by Citizen Hearse and his Trotskyite media janisaries....

While slyly intimating on Dadania News Liar that Alapaloozah was a fat-assed NAZI sow, Citizen Hearse transformed his bum shelter franchise Handy Havens into condos for union satraps.

Johnny was glad to see Alapaloozah had some black friends. So what if he did drugs and had sex with them. It was only natural. He would have been racist not to. He was makng friends.

If he was finally IMPEACHED or FORCED to RESIGN (and they STILL WOULDN'T let him run $CAMH?!) Johnny thought he'd make a great PEER SUPPORT WORKER. Better than Warfarin....

Anyone was better than Butch....

Even Bruce....

Meanwhile Butch did his best to make Romeo an ally. Johnny spent all day in the basement to find just a few records that weren't too scratched and dirty to play. Romeo's basement was disgusting. He expected to discover the mummified remains of the meter reader under the infamous Barbie body parts. He detected human decay in the currents of sewer gas. Sour turnip...

. Him!

He carried his stash with him to the sidewalk and placed it on a credenza while he hopped into the back of Romeo's van where there were boxes of more records he wanted to check. Most of them unfortunately were Mitch Miller and Lawrence Welk. Out of the corner of his eye he thought he caught a glimpse of the fat slob rummaging furtively with his records but it was so fleeting he ignored him. He assumed he'd just shifted the stash to get a better look at the table.

When he got home he discovered the switch.

*****

One brave night after years of Occupational Wandering, Butch became a $CAMH Foundation Man. Finally, with his otherwise totally worthless Philosophy degree from Pork University in Clownsview, he felt worthwhile. He didn't have to be a PLAGIARIST no more! Butch became Change Agent Butch - Foundation Man!

He wrote incredible copy for fundraisers. They were on the cusp of the biggest breakthrough EVER. They were removing stigma.

In reality they were on a precipice, collaborating with the biggest professional stigmatizers in the world. Aimia, Dentsubos, Fleishman Hillard, Tapscott Group Voicesfromthestreet (?!), themselves etc).

For a small consideration, they SOLD WORTHLESS INDULGENCES to corrupt lousy outfits. Bell, McCain, Boston Pizza, CIBC, RBC, TD Bank, Voicesfromthestreet, etc., and themselves. Everyone who got one went to Mental Hell.

Butch's brain virus made him a visionary moneymaker. He applied all the come-ons he'd learned at the internet dating company to copy for Mental Hellness.

They were all going to stay up all night to defeat mental hellness, the most AMAZING STORY of all.

Trixie loved it. She went to hell every night.

Actuallyally he stole it from the long-lost WAR ON DRUGS which nobody questioned because now he was Change Agent Butch Foundation Man and he could write whatever damned DRIVEL he chose and still get paid for it, certainly

more than he ever got ghost-writing Trixie's term paper on the onanistic properties of macrame for Prostitution Studies.

He wouldn't have to go back to teaching! He'd never find himself in the odious position of having to flunk little Mitzi for that essay that he wrote himself, then face same indigant little BITCH, grieving her F and demanding a refund too.)

Maybe he'd go back to school.

He'd always wanted to be a DOCTOR....

That night CEO Trixie Zane awarded herself the RIGHT to STIGMATIZE Dadanian Companies as SAFE Workplaces. Otherwise known as the ORDER OF DADANIA!

Defeat Denial! Darkness to LIGHT!

For BIG DONATIONS $CAMH prostituted its Seal of Approval to abusive corporations while $CAMH CEO Catherine Zahn - and her GANG of Public Relations client firms - labeled them SAFE - like $CAMH itself!

So WHAT in MENTAL HELL was an UNSAFE CORPORATION? AUSCHWITZ?! It was fraudulent BULLSHIT!

Did anyone really want to live in a world that was SAFE for $CAMH?

They pretended to END STIGMA while stigmatizing everyone wholesale, misled everyone with their propaganda that they were on the cusp of a (nonexistent) breakthrough and called it $CAMH Understanding, exploited while insulting THE MENTALLY HELL, and called this delusional or merely deceitful thinking a MOVEMENT. Which in a way it was, resembling nothing so much as the MENTAL HYGIENE MOVEMENT of the 1920s and 30s.

TD Bank, RBC, BELL, Voices from the Street, Dentsu, DENTSUBos, Tapscott Group, TorontoLife etc., and their co-opted knaves and fools - like and including Pat Capponi, Jeremiah Bach, Geoffrey Reaume, et al. - all wanted to live in a world that was SAFE for $CAMH.

Prophylactic mental hell.

*****

HEY! Butch said, removing his NATIVES FAG. It's easy to be a a CRITIC!

Looked like a BAD CASE of EITHER/OR THINKING....

$CAMH Understanding....

An infarction made him SHIT out of his MIND. So what, said Change Agent Butch. It was his turn on the Sunshine List of Money Makers. You couldn't say $CAMH never did anyone any good. Why, back in the day it found Butch a SHOULDER TO CRY ON. Trixie's Foundation got him a JOB! How's THAT - for RESILIENCE!

*****

Butch was smoking (yet another) joint in the alley between the soup kitchen and his overpriced HIPSTER hotel room with the bathroom across the hall.

Transforming Wives? Model suite? Gangway!

It stank like an old man's crotch!

It was HIM!

The PENDULUM OF HISTORY SWINGS BOTH WAYS! That was Hegel when he stopped the clock - a hundred years before Thomas Szasz.

Change Agent Butch! May he find a BERTH that's SAFE - according to Trixie Zane - for his Mental Hell. In other words, forge a Captain's license before setting sail with him in hurricane season. Considering Butch forged it, Johnny wished him BON VOYAGE....

Show your pluck now try your luck....

On the TITANIC!

*****

What else could it have been, but some great collective disaster?

The sinking of an ocean liner.

The Mariposa Belle or the Sam McFee....

Full of – Kiwanis Club Presidents!

The Titanic!

The burning of a grand hotel, a bank or an asylum.

Thing Street Asylum

The ruins not Atlantis with pennants of seaweed streaming from its spires and coelacanths slithering past allegorical figures of Honour and Glory Crowning Time, but THING STREET.

THING STREET ASYLUM....

*****

The shrink by The Falls....

Merely UNFORTUNATE or FREUDIAN SLIP? What do YOU Call a PIZZA BARONESS?
It was even in the DSM - why not? Everything ELSE was! PIZZAPHRENIA?!

There was a DISORDER called MORAL IMBECILITY....

Of course, it didn't exist either, but the pathological lying of $CAMH and its mouthpieces (BELA Hireling of STATE TVO, especially), sponsors and tools, made Johnny wonder.

Was The Man Going Over Niagara Falls just an analogy that the PIZZA BARONESS ran away with (or vice versa) - or an unfortunate FREUDIAN slip?

Because it implied that it was right to ignore someone in real and immediate distress, someone whom one really could help - to RESEARCH an elusive CURE - which looked alarmingly like old-fashioned MENTAL HYGIENE - which was not only NEBULOUS, but DANGEROUS - and here directed at the most vulnerable, at THECHILDREN.

Kindergartens were one thing, but when Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre raised serious money fot $CAMH - it was no KINDERGARTEN. It was brain-based BAD PHARMA - for KIDS![46]

Johnny thought he'd better not call her at all....

P.S. What WAS this UP STREAM / DOWN STREAM jive - to justify prioritizing research over care? Johnny knew he was expected to feel SO SORRY for the SHRINK on the RIVERBANK, but what about the sucker floating by - who DROWNED?

Her shrink was C.K. Sharke![47]

It was a waste of HYDRO!

*****

While his perfervid language in the Canadian Journal of Medicine and Surgery (June, 1907) was meant to convey the pathos of their frail barks drifting to their inevitable doom beneath the Niagara Falls of Dementia, Dr. C. K. Clarke's two sample case histories, J.M. and E.M., revealed instead his total lack of sympathy for his patients.

J.M., abnormally intelligent, was persecuted for cleverness by teachers and classmates. E.M. walked with a proud strut and wore her hair in an unusual style, for which eccentricity she too was persecuted by her peers. She resorted

[46] See, for a typical example of Clarke's interest in children, C. K. Carke's "The Detection of Mental Defect in School Children," The Canadian Journal of Medicine and Surgery 21.6 (June, 1907): 343-48. "Now, what is dementia precox [sic] -- in other words, precocious dementia? If we limit its definition carefully, we find that it is a form of mental disease appearing generally at the first developmental crisis, rapidly running a course culminating in dementia, as characterized by apathy, indifference, negativism, irrelevance and inability to make continued mental effort" (344). See J.P. Harrison, M.D., "Dementia Praecox," The Bulletin of the Ontario Hospitals for the Insane 3.5 (April, 1910), 6-16. He was the Clinical Assistant at the Toronto Asylum in 1910, so his definitions must reflect the way the disease was perceived toward the end of Clarke's tenure at the Toronto Asylum. His definitions are (not surprisingly) very close to his Superintendent's. Dementia Praecox is a "disease ... of the period of puberty and adolescence. It is characterized by a dementia that tends to progress, but which is frequently interrupted by remissions. The majority of cases occur beteen the ages of twenty and forty, though cases have been reported even earlier than the fifteenth year and as late as the fiftieth" (6-7). General symtpoms include "lack of interest, carelessness, and indifference to dress and environment" (9). He also discusses the forms. "Hebephrenia" is characterized by "mental apathy and progressive dementia" (10), "catatonia" by "hysterical attacks, with epileptiform convulsions" (12), and "paranoia" by "delusions of persecution ... not well systematized, occurring in conjunction with marked intellectual impairment" (15). Like Clarke, he considers dementia praecox, or at least the disposition to it, an inherited disorder. He theorizes that the "disease" -- "retrograde process" (7) -- is "hastened, or perhaps immmediately initiated" by "debilitating influences in early life, such as excessive study, masturbation, etc." (7).

[47] C.K. Clarke, "The Defective and Insane Immigrant," The University of Toronto Monthly 8 (June, 1908): 273-78. Clarke presents this individual in terms of a face-to-face confrontation with a great danger. Such a confrontation requires sanity, courage, and something else which Clarke typically requests and which, despite his efforts to redeem it as resistance to "maudlin sentiment," looks suspiciously like callousness -- resistance to sympathy and compassion. Clarke appears oddly isolated between equally "chronic" inmates of the old Asylum, to whose plight his audience has become inured, and the so-called "hordes of degenerates of the English-speaking peoples, to say nothing of those lowest in the social scale of the European and Asiatic races" (273). In 1906-7, Clarke's principal qualification for choosing the best means of making Canada a great nation is still, oddly enough, Asylum experience.

to some form of unnamed wickedness, obviously prostitution, and was arrested and confined in Thing Street Asylum for the Insane. In a few years she, too, was reduced to a lump of hideous clay (346).[48]

*****

Somebody got murdered.... [49]

Was it REALLY such a HARD decision?

Sorry to do this to you, Johnny!

M'Lady and MUSTARD were ALWAYS UPSTREAM - and SHE never even got her feet WET....
Doesn't CUT the MUSTARD - M'Lady....

A WASTE of ELICTRICITY!

*****

Tomorrow Belongs to Citizen Hearse.
Your DEAR LEADER Trixie Zane has decreed YOU are ALL MENTALLY HELL!
Where you are ALL HELL, there is no STIGMA, there is only YOU and TRIXIE - and the GREAT SCIENTISTS and THE GREAT CAPITALIST (pizza & fry baron, especially) who finances her, to LOVE and CARE - for YOU!
ONCE it was considered self-aggrandizing to plaster your MONIKER on the side of a building.
NOW thanks to TRIXIE and Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre it was a NOBLE, GENEROUS ACT, a SIGN - literally - that UNWORTHY SCUM like YOU could be REDEEMED by the BRAND of Hearse-Ferrari with only a few box-tops as proof of purchase....
FINALLY thanks to HEARSE-FERRARI BRAIN DISEASE FASCISM, TRIXIE could BUY A LOT OF MACHINES, CURE EVERYTHING, SOLVE THE MEANING OF LIFE, BRAINWASH YOU and RULE!
But this wasn't for TRIXIE, this was FOR YOU!
You would never SMOKE, GET DRUNK, GET ANGRY, SMASH THINGS, ACT OUT....
Never be a DANGER TO YOURSELF AND OTHERS or LET OTHERS BE A DANGER TO THEMSELVES AND YOU....
YOU WOULD NEVER SIN AGAIN! Thanks to CITIZEN HEARSE you would be UNABLE TO....
Thanks to TRIXIE and HEARSE BREAKTHROUGH you would NOT be free, BUT you would be FREE FROM SIN....
Because their object ultimately was NOT transforming Mental Hell, it was TRANSFORMING HUMAN NATURE....
In fifteen years they saw a WORLD of HAPPY TRANSFORMEES....
What GOD wouldn't do to you, HEARSE-FERRARI wouldn't hesitate to do....
He'd take away your freedom, and make you FAT and MENTALLY HELLTHY....
SLAVES!
Tomorrow belonged - TO CITIZEN HEARSE!
Who belonged to TRIXIE SANE!

*****

Trixie studied the speeches of Mussolini, Hitler, Goebbels and C.K. Sharke - all the great Fascists! - for tips on how to co-opt the language of revolution and apply it to fund-raising for her reactionary movement.
She tested her new treatment on a small control group of engaged businessmen, engaged being her current jargon for any member of the moneyed class sufficiently brain-washed and stupid to give her a DONATION.

What if MAD PEOPLE were radical, she demanded in the Grand Ballroom, not the passive Paschal Lambs they really were. Then they would INSIST that $CAMH be paid lots and lots of money for the latest invasive 19th-century quackery, galvanism, mesmerism, and magnetic brain stimulation for depression and brain disease.

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[48] In an article published in 1911, the year he gave up his superintendency of the Toronto Asylum to superintend the Toronto General Hospital, he echoes phrases from the report for 1907, balefully observing that "my knowledge of family histories in Ontario is far too large for my peace of mind, and I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that certain strains, will produce defective and insane, just as regularly as other strains will reproduce the strong minded and capable" (360). Clarke simultaneously seems to regret possessing such sensitive information, and to relish it -- his regret, principally at his inability to act on it, conveying more than a hint of menace, as if anyone who would oppose him must be secretly abetting a lunatic. All of this, of course, reflects a growing interest in eugenics.

[49] C.K. Clarke, "Some Aetiological Factors in Insanity, also a Few Remarks on Expert Evidence," Canada Lancet 44 (January, 1911): 356-66.

Nothing worked but it was all fun! Wasn't that what curing depression meant?

She continued - for a related example - what if MAD PEOPLE were sufficiently radical to storm Alapaloozah in his Pink Palace? She meant they'd hold him ransom till he gave her another big raise. In reality before reaching Alapaloozah they'd have trashed $CAMH, painted Trixie Zane with hot sticky black tar and rolled the fat bitch in chicken feathers.

Trixie knew that the radicalism she appeared to generously, even suicidally espouse was FAKE. Her rhetoric was CODED. When she perorated to her magnificent conclusion, implying they should all immediately go forth and implement SAFE workplaces, like $CAMH, they knew what she meant.

Dachau! Auschwitz!

No, your can't go back....

Constantinople!

*****

It was Mental Hygiene Fascism, so he wasn't surprised to see $CAMH and Hell Telephony and the P/Bigge Banks shoulder to shoulder. However the idea that they wanted to work together for his Mental Hell made him laugh.

Wasn't it more likely that they wanted to stigmatize unhappy workers as mentally hell while babbling about mental hellness and ignoring the real problem - themselves?!

Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre actually rubbing shoulders with those jerks and calling collusion Voices from the Street - made Johnny PUKE!

They were a cult, a fake religion with its own fake saints in this case Old Hat Vixen Foxy with her Voices from the Street Rent-A-Mental Speakers Bureau, Amanda who faked her terminal cancer martyrdom a few years ago (she even had a shrine in The Compound dedicated just to her!), and Old Hat's client Samantha, who got a schtick at $CAMH and found others schticks as Clean Air Ambadassors - enforcers with plenipotentiary powers to snitch on smokers.

Their speeches were pure Quisling.

The one on $CAMH was especially rotten, written by Saint Samantha and posthumously edited by her devoted sister. It was an uncritical paean that souned like it had been written by Butch or some other hack at $CAMH Foundation if not by Old Weasel-Theatre herself. It toucheed all the usual bases: the transformation, the corporate sponsors, even Vixen Foxy's sophistry that they were removing stigma not just from patients but from corporate clients (as if living in an addictions hospital named after a bad beer wasn't stigmatizing!) - all tendentiously and awkwardly jammed into a piece only ostensibly it seemed about $CAMH and dear departed Samantha.

It was Richler's parody of a chauvinistic rabbi's essay on the Kennedy Assassination, in which the good rabbi continually digresses to talk about the Jewish connections - in the case of Samantha's essay, her SISTER. Samantha even praised herself for introducing cigarette police - clients snitching on clients to enforce the hospital's zero tolerance smoking policy. At Auschwitz they were called Capos. Clearly she had been co-opted - and that was really the problem with virtually all such productions. They were all OLD HAT....

*****

The Curse of Mental Health was $CAMH Psychiatry. Their clinics like and including Downtown West (formerly Archway) were characterized by staff drinking (boozing) after hours, cheap and nasty signage, non-hygienic premises, faeces and urine at the entrances, loud and impertinent posters, theft of clients' funds (so-called "pin money"), impossible case loads, bureaucratic measures that were the very opposite of client-centred, excessive drugging, excessive digital processing (for billing purposes), community treatment orders, medication errors, difficulty seeing a doctor, difficulty seeing the same doctor, lack of continuity, etc. etc....

*****

$CAMH CEO Trixie Zane and Wiener King Hearse-Ferrari's Breakthrough Campaign was Braindisease Sloganeering Fascism.

It certainly wasn't coming from Johnny. It was imposed on him by Citizen Hearse from his Model Suite high atop the plexiglass minarets at Odd and Thing Street.

It was Mental Hygiene!

It was imposed by the ruling satraps without any insight or understanding of the realities of mental hellness and madness and therefore without empathy for the mentally hell.

Pioneers of Alienation

Hearse-Ferrari showed no understanding of the human condition and therefore showed no genuine humanity. He merely wanted to cure it. This, unbalanced by caring, was worse than madness.

Sorry to do this to you, Johnny....

Genocide!

*****

So what the fuck was $CAMH ENGAGE?!

It was touted as a Soviet of young professionals devoted to doing something TRANSFORMATIVE and wonderful for Mental Hell.

In reality it was comprised of a lot of playboys, sports, and swells.

He noted the preponderance of public relations types, policy wonks, etc.

He noted too, regarding the group's vaunted freshness - the presence of Citizen Hearse's scion, Ulyanov. Hearse-Ferrari was the Babbitt of Brain Disease.

There was at least one brain-disease(d) academic among them - so $CAMH ENGAGE began to look like nothing new at all, just yahoos pimping for BRAIN DISEASE MENTAL HELL.

The group was anything but open. They were blinkered by privilege - and inexperience.

Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre moonlighted for FleishmanHillard - a PR firm. But she scalped tickets on twitter as Paris Mauvaise.

Why sell tickets to the Casino in disguise? It was like wearing the head scarf in a beverage room.

She was ashamed of her latest schtick but unable to stop bcause of her addiction issues.

Otherwise she couldn't possibly stand up in front of a roomfull of junkies and demand her tiara and bat cape so she could transform them.

Johnny knew better. Look at Bruce and Butch.

Yes, she said stupid things. When she was stoned....

Trouble was it was getting harder. She needed more and more drugs to stare them down. Bullshitting everybody took fortitude, but mainly drugs.

Some Awards Nights she just couldn't find the right batcape, or a fix. Maybe it just didn't work anymore. Maybe it was broken. She couldn't FLY!

She got the shakes. She gobbled tranquilizers....

She crashed. Like Germanwings....

She'd never been closer to Paris than Thing Street.

Which according to Jah Lo See was right next door.

*****

So what did they know about chronic mental hellness? About Pioneers of Alienation? Johnny was a PIONEER!

They knew NOTHING! Which was good for $CAMH because it meant there was nothing like reality or understanding to get in the way of their enthusiasm for brain disease and other delusional obsessions....

Like money....

They lived in Model Suites among the minarets of the new Thing Street that $CAMH finally felt a part of.

They thought they were pretty funky.

Johnny tried to read the tweets of Scotch Tape Jr - son of the man who raved about internet openness - but they were blocked! So much for engagement. They had nothing on the RADIO ARTIST....

The radiator got better reception....

Meanwhile, if you would just step outside your Media Bubble for a moment....

Get your HEADS out of your ASSES....

On Thing Street....

Across the lifespan....

Around the world (Trixie's BOOK of BROMIDES)....

The FACE of SCHIZOPHRENIA looked like....

Shit....

Emile Durkheim House....

Thing Street Asylum

Typical $CAMH Mental Hell Fascism. Huge ugly posters shouted SLOGANS where Butch used to stand quietly.... Smoking his fag....

It was institutional violence directed at poor people too sick to defend themselves. The new hardcore NAZIS at Stalag West specialized in complex mental hell, community treatment orders, and intensives.

They plastered the door with cheap, nasty posters ordering clients diagnosed with SCHIZOPHRENIA not to see a shrink without booking an appointment first.

Clients went to the Stalag because it was a drop-in.

Not any more. Now there was engagement! Another Orwellian term. Trixie was in on this one, too. Getting rid of stigma? No! Clients - especially the ones who liked to stand, quietly smoking their fag in the doorway.

They could smoke in the traffic, in the middle of Thing Street, for all she cared. Heil!

In reality clients continued to drop in whenever they had to, then Deane would write them down as having checked in first. They continued to smoke in front of the poster, too.

Clients in reality weren't at all like the ones on posters.

*****

If CITIZEN HEARSE was a VISIONARY - then it deserved to be stated, HITLER was an urban planner....

Hearse-Ferrari's Trotskyite Hippie vision of love was a vision of dullness, and the ultimate dullness - DEATH.

Crows twittering on the same frequency - twittering the same thing - as a metaphor for the internet was less day-dream than living nightmare - a real-life fascist fairy-tale of totalitarian accord.

Because they weren't birds. They were people - and not all the same. They did NOT agree - so they mustn't twitter on the same frequency. That really was for the birds.

Nobody could have been more mistaken and consequently more evil - than Hearse-Ferrari. It figured that he started as a Trotskyite apocalyptic totalitarian gangster.

Throwing money at brain disease wouldn't even cure brain disease - which was only a part of the problem - which in turn was only part of the reality.

He hoped Citizen Hearse was wrong about the internet too. It seemed quite likely.

Birds descended from dinosaurs. Old as coelacanths. And new....

*****

He wondered how they chose POSTER PEOPLE.

For one thing, they had POSTHUMOUS POSTER PEOPLE.

While in a video the idea might be DROLL or evenTWISTED, the reality - from what purported to be a HOSPITAL - was SICK.

It was grave-robbing....

*****

He thought it would be interesting to read one of $CAMH CEO Trixie Zane's tweets. It was appalling.

It made him puke....

A schizoid mixture of shlocky bathos over Robin Williams's celebrity suicide, and hard-nosed exploitation of it for brain disease.

The sentimentality looked put-on (she admired Russel Brand's schlock on schlock "fallen bird on a hard floor" - feh!), but the exploitation was real.

Likewise the dogmatism of Trixie's brain-disease approach to mental helllness. No one ever put it more succinctly than herself. Depression was a BRAIN DISEASE....

He wanted to thank her. Big Nurse Trixie Zane!

The IABC gave her a prize for something!

Not only did she not have any evidence that mental hellllness was a brain disease, Mr Williams - whose alleged mental hellness she was exploiting - wasn't her patient.

Was she tired when she tweeted that? He knew that was her position, but she usually spun it more artfully.

Pioneers of Alienation

She'd been too busy cruising Thing Street with Old Polyps looking for cheap fanbacks, staying up all night in hipster art-bars, changing the face of mental hellness....

*****

He'd seen that face before. In the mental hygiene movement of the 20s and 30s, in eugenics, in all kinds of biological determinism, in social engineering, in Trixie's readiness to speak for the dead, in her overblown claims and false hopes, in her emotional manipulation, in her moneyed elitism, in her sycophancy with stupid rich donors - in Fascism....

She had risen steadily through the muck of the Motor Inn and Prostitution Studies through Dadania Ironic straight to Emile Durkheim House and $CAMH....

It was all coming back!

This wasn't the first time, Trixie!

*****

St. Trixie Zane of the Cathedral of $CAMH At the Crossroads of Brain Disease and Mental Hellness....

Down Shock Corridor....

*****

These are crummy buildings, Praetorius lisped. They're dark, the corridors are long and narrow, the rooms are tiny; it isn't a therapeutic feeling.

He said in the new buildings the halls would be larger, the rooms more airy, and the windows light-enhanced to provide a warmer atmosphere.

> We want to fight the stigma, of the terrible site of 999 Thing, he said. We thought if we could do it right and well on the place that is notorious, we could demonstrate to the whole community that these illnesses are like any other human pain and suffering.
>
> Toronto OBSERVER, Nov 2 2009

Johnny couldn't help noticing. Thing Street hadn't been called Nine Ninety-Nine in a hundred years. Trixie's favorite TRICK. Whenever she wanted to look TRANSFORTMATIVE she reversed history, deleted progress. She compared herself to the old Asylum. She looked progressive!

She'd learned it from Praetorius, and sex-trade outreach at her Motor Motel down Thing Street. She filled it in the off-season. She'd spent her whole life filling Model Suites with her clients. She always stood beside the oldest Lilly Marlene she could find, under the dimmest street lamp.

Doing her Face of Mental Hell....

But UNCLE DEAREST....

They were NOT illnesses... like any other human pain and suffering.

According to Uncle Scamh's own BIBLE, the DSM, they were not illnesses at all - his GOOD BOOK called them DISORDERS.

So, wasn't it true that, when Old Polyps wanted to raise money he talked about illnesses (as if there was something there he could cure), but when he wanted to label and discriminate and PRESCRIBE without EVIDENCE - it was back to DISORDERS again? As if he'd never left....

Then, on top of all this bullshit, was the STIGMA SCHTICK - the very SITE was STIGMATIZING? But for WHOM, Polyps? Not for LaBatt and Beamish and McCain and Bell....

Their names on the new buildings....

Beaming south across The Lake

Bright Boy Wanted!

Disturbing the Coelacanths....

Stigmatizing....

He always talked about ending STIGMA like it was all about CLIENTS - but what corporate clients? what about HIM? He'd been at Thing Street, professionally speaking, just as long - 150 years, in fact - and he'd had a pretty mixed REP for most of that time. Was that what he really meant?

Uncle Dearest wanted them to forget about it? Wasn't this just another of his SCAMS at $CAMH?

Thing Street Asylum

Talking about ending stigma didn't end it anyway, it reinforced it - and ignored the worse stigmatization going on - Mental Hellness is a BRAIN DISEASE, YOU are SICK, WE are WELL, etc....

Nonetheless, Johnny decided to TRY IT. He said it was time they ended the cruel and unusual stigmatization of psychiatry for crimes against humanity in the name of CURING the population, ranging from (but not limited to) forced sterilization, doping, and murder. It was time they forgot about the history of the Mental Hygiene Movement, when someone's DISORDER was having an unwed mother. It was time they forgot that this was only halted by the revelations from the 3rd Reich - where it all led. It was time they forgot that it was starting all over again because they forgot.

He wondered if that helped UNCLE POLYPS? Did he feel better? Stigma-free and and fancy-fee....

He clearly wasn't getting anywhere with him....

He found him worse than STIGMAZING. He found him SCHIZO-MIMETIC....

He found him....

Not exactly crummy but FAR from THERAPEUTIC - the NEW $CAMH on THING STREET - BADPHARMA MUSSOLINI....

*****

Stuff it in!

*****

Johnny was a survivor, having lived for years in an unofficial group home and worked in an official one right next door. He knew the life. Always on the edge, between nearly unbearable poverty on welfare and truly unbearable work (on not much more than welfare). He knew how it was....

Not masturbating too loudly on the 3rd floor because it made the schizophrenic escalate on the 2nd floor which kept the landlady awake on the 1st.

The Emile Durkheim flop-house sandwich....

He even knew how it smelled. Feet. Always plenty ass. Guys smoking cheap native cigarettes on Emile Durkheim's balcony right next door. Ground Zero.

The toilets got plugged all the way to Thing Street, which was solid shit anyway. No snake could reach that far. No water to flush with. They bought Perrier from the North Koreans next door and filled the tanks. Deane suggested they PISS in them too.

The toilets over-flowed with piss and shit. The tenants dumped in their waste baskets. Emptying them months later Johnny discovered their mummified turds like aborted mummy babies.

Mack's enormous ass looming over his tiny waste basket....

Empty chip bags, crumpled cigarette packs, crusty socks....

Somebody died alone and rotted till somebody else noticed the stink.

It was him.....

It wasn't easy....

It was hard....

Life, in a Porkdale flop.

*****

Johnny hated Crazy Jane's Asylum Tour Group. The worst things! They didn't want to know....

Pioneers of Alienation

Max the Butcher claimed the wall was his because he exploited it in Never Had It So Good. It had been there for two hundred years but nobody noticed it till Max came along and mentioned it in one of his many communications. True it had been physically created by patients and city engineers, but Max gave it meaning when he co-opted it as a metaphor for all the suffering of his bitter, bitching, delusional life. Somebody else might have built it, but Max made the wall. The reverse was at least equally true....

His goons smashed the camera in the face of anyone rash enough to photograph what he considered his intellectual property.

Both his book and the wall were exploited by the psychiatric establishment as decoys, distractions from their War on The Mentally Hell. Something to HANG above a PROFESSOR'S DESK, to paraphrase one of his many sneering public utterances. He was thinking of Charlie Handy and those pictures that some unfortunate artist had taken without first asking his permission, or offering him a cut of the royalties.

That's what his book was. Johnny wished he'd hang himself too.

Charlie Manson had followers too.

Thinking of whom, Johnny noticed Graham Crackers standing beside an ancient laundry chute. He asked him if he wanted THING STREET ASYLUM. He said he didn't even want it in the neighborhood. It was clean. Johnny wanted to say, so was his book. It wasn't, so he nodded and went on. The man was obviously mad.

He recognized Jah Lo See in the throng, in pharmacist's drag.

He didn't recognize anybody....

Everyone looked familiar....

She'd been to The Food Bank of the Holy Baby Jesus. She got good mutton.

Brother Freddie'd also given her 3 boxes of Kraft Dinner (expired) and some gummies. He'd put them in the clear, plastic bag at her feet.

She'd seen him, stapling his $CAMH posters to every wooden telephone pole on Thing Street. She didn't recognize him. She glared at his Transforming Wives T-shirt, parodying the Transforming Lives ad campaign of Thing Street Asylum.

Johnny put Dr. Praetorius's head on Colin Clive's body. While Clive had been exalted, as he presented Elsa Lancaster to The Monster, Dr. Praetorius was his usual bland self. The juxtaposition, of his little bearded neo-Freudian face, with the big hair and mad expression of Elsa Lancaster as The Bride, exaggerated his essential mediocrity.

Jah Lo See hated Johnny's T-shirt. She had a delusion of reference. It was about her! Johnny was making fun of her!

When he offered her a copy of his flyer, she started screaming. She said, it was because he thought she was one of THEM.

Gooble-gobble! Gooble-gobble!

One of us! One of us!

She wanted him to know, she had a certificate from Thing Street Asylum. Saying, SHE was SANE!

Johnny knew better. Trixie was....

Max the Butcher started talking in a querulous psych-survivor tremolo his voice cracking with indignation as he circumstantially described the outrages.

There's where Marion tore her best cocktail dress, last time she eloped in 1917, with only her change purse and the address of a good bootlegger....

Under that telephone pole the Radio Artist broadcast her first program, acting all the parts herself....

From that clump of bushes Miss Marvel spotted druggy-looking things, and eaves-dropped on their conversation....

The corridors were long dark and narrow, the rooms were tiny. It wasn't a therapeutic feeling....

Etc., etc....

Despite these hardships, they made lives for themselves, and everything worked out fine in....

Thing Street Asylum

The End.

*****

The best example of $CAMH corporate philistinism was the YOU'VE CHANGED sign plastered on the side of an ugly old building overlooking the poop-and-scoop parkette named after Dr Praetorius, a non-entity (his specialty was diet disorders) touted by the mental hospital (especially by Trixie Zane of course) and by the pharmaceuticals as a Great Man and Benefactor of Madkind for expropriating resources originally designated for the urban poor and awarding them to the middle class.

The sign was touted - even more outrageously - as an example of street art - graffiti! - and grassroots sentiment approving of the NEW KIND OF HOSPITAL. It was corporate sloganeering - trying to co-opt street art and, at least for the middle-class Babbitts who now shopped in the overpriced (government-funded!) clip-joints masquerading as galleries at Thing and Ozz - it worked!

Thing Street was anything BUT raw! unscripted - more like so TOTALLY PROCESSED and so PREDICTABLE and SAFE - they didn't even KNOW!

*****

He was a rabid chauvinist who hated normals the way Hitler hated Jews, envying them their respectability and wealth....

Like the original Hitler, he was terribly middle-class, and wanted his followers, and his enemies, to know.

He shrewdly revealed little details of himself.

Cowering in his parents' bedroom with his sister who was then about 12 or 13 years old. Mother balling in the living-room. Father and brother (the latter 18 years old) pummeling one another on the floor. He knew it was over something sexual that his brother had done to his sister, that his father had found out about.

Father left home (he was alcoholic and abusive) taking the good German (Blaupunkt) radio. He never lived at home again, and he only saw him from time to time on weekends. He lived for a few years in a small house or cabin operated by a Motel and christened The Shack - he was not supposed to be there, but went anyway, usually after skating. His sister punished him by standing him in the corner with his face against the wall, because his skates were dry - which meant that he'd gone to The Shack again instead of going straight home.

She made him a fag. After he fell for Butch, he was beat up at the skating rink by a bunch of commies whose ring-leader had made homophobic taunts. It was a bashing for which he required stitches to a cut on the back of his head. He vowed revenge, but for the time being he withdrew.

He had brain disease.

He was schizophrenic.

He listened to Wagner.

He read Cervantes in Wacousta Park.

He wrote poetry and attempted suicide.

He listened to Mahler and shared his taste with perverts he met hitch-hiking on the 401. He thumbed rides with them in powder-blue Lincoln's.

He never went all the way.

He failed at everything.

He ran away from home, ostensibly to study - only to withdraw more deeply, helped occasionally by friends who let him sleep on the Zsa Zsa Special, and occasionally gave him something to eat in exchange for a harangue.

He became quite the orator.

He was an Occupational Wanderer drifting toward The Falls....

Occasionally he got part-time jobs, painting houses and selling post cards in the street. He barely made it to Hogtown. He had only $100 and managed to find a pension - on the same day. By the early 80s he'd managed to get back to school. He supported himself by working at night in cheap hotels, so he missed a lot of classes. He continued to live in a pension, and had no social life.

He considered himself an artist.

Pioneers of Alienation

His landlord was none other than Charles Waldorf Handy, Professor in the Philosophy Department of the University of Titz, big shot at the World Psychoanalytic Congress, World-Class Neo-Freudian psychoanalyst - and Secret Jewish associate of Citizen Hearse. Indeed, many people suspected that they were one and the same.

He intimated that Handy was a creep. He locked the thermostat, filled the pension with his own clients, and rationed toilet paper. Max eloped, owing his landlord several months' rent - and a case of asswipes bearing the bite-mark logo of the Sharke Institute. He had it coming, the dirty SHRINK!

He let everyone know that he really did complete his Master's Degree at the U of Titz - interrupted by periods of unemployment and struggle.

He was frugal, he didn't drink or smoke. He saved money to enter the Ph.D. Program at the University of Montage. Before leaving for the capitol, he visited Elvira one last time at her brothel. She bitched and whined about their coelacanth brother.

He realized what it was his siblings had been squabbling over all these years.

Pussy!

Meanwhile he was having difficulties of a not entirely different sort with his Thesis Advisor, Dildo Wingnut. Dildo was older than Hindenburg, lazier, and a cunt. While he'd taught at the University for centuries, Max was his first doctoral candidate. He was also his last.

Inevitably Max found himself teaching in exile, at Lethe Bridge U. This was very hard on him, very isolating - especially when Dildo and his creature Babyface Marjoram wrote the Chair of his new department that he was homosexual, anti-psychiatric, and fascist. Babyface begged Dunton Depot to fire him, before he contaminated the whole department with his NATIONAL SOCIALIST ideals. It wouldn't have been hard to do but it was unnecessary. They were already Nazis.

He went through a very messy grievance process with the University of Titz, when his application for tenure was overlooked for a candidate with no experience or publication credits but plenty of ass. His former Chair sent him a picture of a hypodermic needle with an article about Walter Benjamin's suicide. Cheers, he wrote.

He STILL didn't smoke or drink. He didn't even have sex with his students. He hinted that he'd lost an OLD COMRADE in 1995 conflicted about being gay AND an Anglican priest. He couldn't see why, but the comrade underwent conversion therapy from C. Lamprini Eel, the most notorious mountebank at Thing Street Asylum. Of course, it didn't work, but Herr Doctor Eel acquired all sorts of damaging information for his Mental Archives and Dime Museum.

The final stab-in-the-back to his academic campaign was the treason of Bishop's University in Lummoxville. They hired him (albeit cheaply, on a short-term contract) and then reneged, ostensibly because he'd asked for an advance (to get him there - he was on Welfare) - but he knew it was something else. They knew he was working on a book called SWORDS IN MYRTLE DRESS'D: TOWARD A RHETORIC OF SODOM. Bishops University was a tiny, conservative, Anglican College. They figured he was writing a manual about HOW TO FUCK A BOY. They already knew.

He continued to live in crummy pensions in the Capitol, always on Welfare and occasionally finding cash-only work. In 1997-98 he volunteered in the Archives of the old THING STREET ASYLUM. This helped him gather material for TROPING THE ASYLUM, but this stint ended badly after an anti-merger protest he was involved in fell apart - betrayed (he didn't think that was too strong a word for it) by that quisling psych-survivor poser, MAX THE BUTCHER.

His volunteering at Thing Street was crucial to the development of his theories of MAD NATION. He was very moved by the experience - despite the negative things that happened, the bad politics and the refusal of Eel and Praetorius to acknowledge his art - especially the play Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre staged to commemorate their ANSCHLUSS with Lotteries and Casinos (albeit a wake).

Reduced to working in Stalags (including the wonderfully misnamed REGERATION HOUSE here in swell Porkdale) reaming toilets and distributing antipsychotic medications for people with mental hellness - mainly pizzaphrenia, he never forgot he was an artist.

After his mentor castrated himself with a shot from his father-in-law's Lugar, he found work in Emergency Shelters run by the Hearse Organization, where the fights, suicides, threats, homelessness, distress and death aggravated the symptoms of his nervous disorder: nausea, panic attacks, acute anxiety, suicidal ideation, etc. They were his Iron Cross, the basis of his subsequent success as a schizoid neurasthenic in need of $CAMH ANGER MANAGEMENT.

His whole life described an oscillation between prostration and panic attacks accompanied by intense nausea and vomiting - a vicious cycle of schizoid withdrawal leading to trauma, leading to greater withdrawal, etc.... When most distressed, on the least provocation he would trash everything - music CDs, DVDs, pictures, books, etc....

GARBAGE NIGHT....

KRISTALNACHT....

Not a THERAPEUTIC FEELING....

He considered his milieu very un-therapeutic (to say the least). Citizen Hearse wanted to evict him and all the other clients, so he could double the rents - despite the fact that he was accommodating The Scion in the building. Porko had a few relatives of his own, whom he used to provoke the tenants. Warfarin Boy, Donut Girl, and Little Herman.

Thing Street Asylum

Of course the super was crazy - that didn't stop him from being totally the landlord's creature. Their latest shtick was evicting tenants by moving their spoiled, dope-smoking relatives into their units. Horrible milieu, really unhealthy!

If $CAMH's KWAME MACKENZIE didn't have his head up his ass, he'd research THING STREET as a social cause of schizophrenia!

Max let it be known that he was on meds for trauma, stress and anxiety - so far, nothing worked. Perhaps it was obvious. Nothing worked!

He told everyone about his First Christmas Tree, which for years he refused to dismantle (he stole that SCHTICK from Harold Lloyd), his childhood in a backwater border-town, the bedroom his fond parent maintained for him like a shrine....

He presented well, albeit with some exaggeration...

Not a word of course, about his obsession with everything violent, evil, and NAZI! He only intimated that he withdrew, for all anyone knew like a saint into the wilderness, but really TO SCRAWL SWAZTIKAS ALL DAY IN HIS CELL - like DOCTOR MABUSE....

He was lionized by the very Normals he despised and envied. He attended their soirees, frequented Thing Street art-bars where he plugged his book. He pretended it was about mad things, but it was nothing more or less than a projection of his own self-pity and rage onto the dead. It was his MEIN KAMPF.

He would begin reasonably enough, to discuss his trials. But soon his voice would rise in a shrill whine, as he recalled with indignation how NORMALS had cheated him all his life. Of respectability, and wealth....

He developed an inexhaustible appetite for marching, and BED-PULLS, especially around walled fortifications, and ASYLUMS.

He grew inordinately fond of walls, the older the better. He said they were HIS, because they'd been built by HIS THINGS, whom of course he'd never even met, but nevertheless claimed the right to speak for.

They were his FOLK!

Messers Praetorius and Eel observed the ascent of their Little Corporal at first with apprehension, then with satisfaction as they realized he could be USED.

They forgot about Geli Raubal, and Max's disgusting ball(s). He was a PATSY, a TOOL, and a distraction, indeed a NUT. While marching his followers around useless walls, wailing about past abuses, they wouldn't notice they were EMPTY! And they'd been abused, but too busy thinking about somebody else's abuses to realize - before it was TOO LATE!

The walls were EMPTY! There wasn't even a HOSPITAL behind them any more. Just some fancy devices to identify and label a thousand varieties of mental hellness, and equally EMPTY promises to CURE IT, but nothing to TAKE CARE of MAD THINGS, let alone Artaud's AUTHENTIC MADMEN, who went nuts, out of a superior sense of HONOR....

So the MADPRIDE HITLER railed at the t-t-m-m-m-ultous t-t-times, cursing his d-d-doctors. They were sch-sch-schemers, p-p-plotters and sch-sch-schemers! They'd stabbed him, in the back!

His pits stank from their bad medication, and nobody reminded him to take a shower. His principal care provider was a thoughtless teenager with an on-line diploma from GEORGE BROWN COLLEGE - a QUACK!

It was like the last days in the Bunker, when the Fuhrer counted on children, and ASTROLOGERS, to save the REICH. His followers dwindled to a few sycophants and out-of-work porn stars, with Mexican silver and big funny hats. Charlie Manson had better FOLLOWERS! A Fuhrer without a Reich, a MADPRIDE HITLER without an ASYLUM - equally hopeless!

Yet not entirely without hope. There was that business of the double, the missing skull bones - BRAZIL or, for MADPRIDE HITLER, exile - teaching ENTITLEMENT STUDIES in CLOWNSVIEW at the DADANIAN BERCHTESGADEN, PORK UNIVERSITY!

For everyone else, the Marshall Plan - HOGTARRYO WORKS or, for exceptionally LUCKY PARTY-MEMBERS, Odious Pee!

HEIL! Meaning, fuck you!

*****

He thought $CAMH was fascist, but TOTALITARIAN was the better word, since FASCIST and COMMUNIST were really just heads or tails of the same debased coin.

$CAMH was a militant, anti-democratic, one party medical model, social engineering STATE CAPITALIST TOTAL INSTITUTION, colluding with global DRUG CARTELS for the sake of human trafficking (charging fees and selling drugs to virtual slaves).

They came by their totalitarianism naturally - they'd inherited it from the old asylum they had recently destroyed and transformed into shopping centres and model homes.

$CAMH represented the aestheticization of Mental Hellness and MADNESS, the emptying of Mental Hell and MADNESS of any and all REALITY. That explained - though it certainly couldn't EXCUSE - their penchant for

Pioneers of Alienation

PROPAGANDA: their slick movies, pornographic advertising, grandiose unprovable (and historically FALSE) assertaions, and totally indifferent ignorance of the lessons of history and experience.

Taken together none of their statements made sense - this more than anything marked them as TOTALITARIAN or maybe just plain stupid.

One moment all for ENDING STIGMA, the next labeling everyone with BRAIN DISEASE.

Transforming LIVES meant Tranforming LIVE ONES.

It was a NEW ERA for Mental Hell every time they SCORED a big $30,000,000.00 donation.

The NEW KIND OF Hospital was The NONE OF IT'S KIND Hospital.

Tranforming THE NEIGHBORHOOD was NEIGHBORHOOD CLEANSING.

It wasn't PART of the NEIGHBORHOOD it was ALL of IT - CONDOS, ART-BARS, HIPSTER TEA ROOMS, GALLERIES, CONDOS, CONDOS, CONDOS, PORKDALE MISSISSAUGA, etc., etc....

They weren't Removing STIGMA. They were REMOVING BUTCH (Babyface Marjoram was already pretty far gone!).

They were Removing STIGMA from CONFLICT OF INTEREST, COLLUSION, and CRIME.

CLIENT-CENTRED meant CORPORATE CLIENT-CENTRED, M'Lady Margaret DUMONT (PIZZAPHRENIA) McCAIN, MA IT'S JUST LIKE BEING THERE (HELL) BELL, LaBATT'S BLUE - MAKE IT A BLUE - better 20, etc., etc., etc....

Silly FAGGOT - Johnny forgot, they didn't HAVE to MAKE SENSE. They were BIG BROTHER!

1001 Thing Street West was 1984.

$CAMH! Hogtown's most TRUTH CHANGING ADDRESS....

That was why the PROFESSIONAL LIARS of $CAMH could utter ABSURDITIES about MADNESS and MENTAL ILLNESS, then hypocritically ask the PUBLIC to RE-EXAMINE THEMSELVES.

Which was what one would have expected from JOE STALIN or GENGIS KHAN.

The GRAND OPENING was your EXECUTION....

Which was why DADANIANS put up with the CONSTANT BULLSHIT of $CAMH. MAD PRIDE should have spoken up, but they were disordered FASCIST gangsters.

Max had co-opted them....

Butch always wanted to be a doctor.... a psycho-surgeon, to be precise....

Bruce was the TALL OAK.... broken on top....

They were peer support workers....

They had lived experience....

In Trixie's private MAD PRIDE SS GANGSTER ARMY, they were the first recruits....

The first thing they stole was the NAME, then the IDEA they obviously knew nothing about. How could people be PROUD of something they didn't even acknowledge?

More normals than ever thought MENTAL HELLNESS was real, and MADNESS was a HEAD COLD.

Why didn't they ask $CAMH to "RE-EVALUATE" themselves, and prove that their "redevelopment" wasn't JUST A SCAM, that it really benefitted THING STREET CRAZIES - formerly served by the hospital they tore down and replaced with an ugly and pretentious CONDO COMPLEX with COMMERCIAL RETAIL SPACE for the WELL-TO-DO UNWELL. Just TO START....

Then, JUST TO START, they should INSIST that $CAMH FIRE TRIXIE and WEASEL-THEATRE and all their other PROFESSIONAL LIARS, for having LIED TOO MUCH ALREADY....

*****

Johnny woke up screaming....

Clutching a bloody shit-smeared copy of DSMIV (1994 ed.; copy annotated in crayon by Professor C. Lamprini Eel, Ph.D., this is YOU Johnny Boy, etc. etc.; VERY foxed) in quivering feral paws....

Only, he hadn't been DREAMING....

HE was MAD PRIDE HITLER!

He didn’t know which was the sun or the moon....

*****

Porko was eight years old living in a duplex on Thing Street.... Mommie Dearest was doing her face for parent-teacher night.... Tarting up for her public....

Porko was barely even steady on his feet but she smacked him in the mouth for forgetting to empty the garbage full of her used snot rags when he waddled past it that morning....

She wanted him to do the laundry but she was afraid he'd get his head caught in the wringer again and suffer even worse brain damage than before....

Porko might fumble his rosary beads or bludgeon Father Boychuck with his own censor mistaking it for a yo-yo.... All the Fragrant Flowers of Little Saint Francis would be incensed against her....

Porko's Old Man was preoccupied by his own projects.... Taking in rough-trade and phoning the cops on them while they were sleeping....

When Porko was a teenager he was walking home from his first real job in the library when a Portuguese immigrant named Jose Ferreira traumatized him for life with a big dog....

*****

Carlotta at the Loco Laundromat....

Breathless from her latest abortion, and an interview for a web-designer job at Dadania Ironic. She hadn't actually got the job yet, but the interview went swimmingly....

He could believe the abortion, but he suspected the interview was a lie....

*****

He remembered when she first came into the Thing Store....

She had two little boys with her.... Damien and Jason....

They kept punching and biting one another.... Then they noticed all the things and joined forces.... Jason would start to babble about some thing.... Damien would ask please sir, can my brother have it.... He's poor and hasn't any toys....

By the end of the visit they had loaded up their stroller with their take.... That's what they used it for....

Then off to SICK KIDS and Dr. Szatmari....

Carlotta finally bought an ugly china cabinet and an enormous long buffet from Romeo.... But when Johnny delivered her things to her crib in Citizen Hearse's Best Lodge high above the steaming alleys and reeking gutters of Thing Street, he didn't see any technical manuals....

Just a squalid little volume labeled Edwardian Architectural Drawings (very foxed!)....

There wasn't any Hydro....

Carlotta lit a candelabra, on Romeo's buffet. Where he took her, last time....

She and Lesbia Maecenas were invoking Satan to put toad-spells on Citizen Hearse....

Romeo told her to cool it with her landlord.... Citizen Hearse.... The crack-head in the fedora.... Think of the children....

At that very moment, Damien was in the hallway, luring Jason into an abandoned elevator shaft....

Citizen Hearse refused to remove the PCB-ridden bomb-making apparatus that the loco Taliban left on the balcony after they got evicted for operating a meth lab....

Carlotta called Damien inside just in time.... To make him stand on the balcony at night in his footie pajamas.... Firing spit-balls at Citizen Hearse's Russian-trained body guards using only a Dixie straw....

The guards were armed.... They yanked their revolvers out of the holsters and spun around like commandos.... Drawing on crowds of late-night revelers....

Fuck yuh, bastads....

The first hearing before the rental board.... She was late.... She claimed that when she arrived the adjudicator was just leaving.... He said he had decided against her.... Citizen Hearse had testified that she had not been paying rent.... She showed the adjudicator her receipts....

She described how the adjudicator's neck turned red like he was having an apoplectic seizure.... He said he was going to do something he had never done before.... Reverse his own decision.... He scheduled a second hearing in two weeks....

Sure....

Remember, Romeo said, you have kids....

Romeo took her to the second hearing in Old Shitty Hall.... The adjudicator decided that she could stay and that Citizen Hearse had to make repairs.... But she had to pay rent....

Next Carlotta tried the voodoo.... She begged Romeo to find her another book of toad-spells....

Romeo said they wouldn't work on Citizen Hearse.... Citizen Hearse was immune.... Carlotta believed he had an amulet.... Romeo said he had lawyers....

Yes, and she had kids....

They were subsisting on free doughnuts and chokelite cake down at the Coffee Slime.... The proprietor was hot for her too.... He wanted to make her his fancy woman....

Carlotta even tried the kindness of relatives. It wasn't hard; they didn't have any....

She was building.... RESILIENCE!

Pioneers of Alienation

*****

Porko entered Johnny's THING STORE wearing a T-shirt with the slogan I DO LAUNDRY. His escutcheon.
It resembled a POSITRON....
Johnny imagined him doing the laundry at every crisis of his fucked-up mental life....

*****

Jose Ferreira's Portuguese Waterdog. It was ugly stupid and spoiled. It cost two thousand loonies and it drove everyone mad. It was obnoxious. It bit snarled barked all the time. The groomer gave up trying to sissify it with the usual dandified Portuguese pompadorable poodle-cut that went with this formerly working-class breed.
It resembled nothing so much as a Giant Pomeranian!

She sighed as she adjusted the setting of her razor.
She shaved it skin-head punk-style and stuck a paper-clip in its nose....

When Jose Ferreira saw it, he screamed.... Its show-dog career ended.... By the time its hair grew back it would have missed its big chance to be a S.T.A.R.... He'd never recover those two thousand loonies....
He couldn't even rent him out for stud service.... He was so frightful nothing would want to fuck him.... At least now it was safe to leave him outside.... That was a good idea.... He didn't want to have him around....

It was long in the body like a snake.... It didn't have a head.... Only a tremendous snout with a big wet round shiny-black nose on it like a colossal olive on a swivel-stick.... Lining the tremendous snout were batteries of highly infectious yellow tusks.... Between the tusks hunks of horse-hair and straw from Ferreira's favorite Empire Sofa.... Pieces of missing cats.... Teddy Bears.... plastic toys....
Last but by no means least it had a stupendous hypertrophic angry-red ASS, that it licked like a lollipop when there were no cats Empire sofas or children's toys to disembowel....

A weird shadow loomed suddenly on the threshold of Johnny's emporium.... It looked like a dragon.... It wasn't Puff.... Fuck, it was R.E.X....
Jose Ferreira couldn't restrain him.... The Thing Store was full of sofas and stuffed children's toys.... REX started barking like a certain faggy-fat City Alderman troughing-out in a certain pretentious local greasy frog Rest-O-Rant both of which shall remain anonymous even if everybody knows who they are and vomits accordingly....
Porko and his honey-cone Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre entered next.... She had great tits.... Like an Empire Sofa with the guts busting out....
Johnny clued in the same time as REX.... Johnny kicked its skinny ass, all red and angry looking....
Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre screamed.... Johnny was so violent and MALE.... Worse than Alapaloozah.... Probably wanted to drive her brats into a pylon....
Honey! Porko screamed like a woman. Do you wanna go?
She was fainting.... Porko took her by the hand and whisked her away from horrible Johnny and his Thing Store.... He could forget about chicken dumpling to-night....
Poor, poor Jose Ferreira and hith doggy, Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre lithped tragically....
Meanwhile REX was getting his ass kicked again.... This time by a big mean pit-bull....
REX retreated into the store and bounded dowstairs.... Like he played with dolls....
Porko scowled over his shoulder as they beat it.... Himself and Honey.... He wasn't even gonna take the fag's money.... Wasn't gonna mooch his free ciggies.... He was all red and angry-looking too....
What Johnny got for saving her tits....
Dick....

*****

The POMERANIAN PEER SUPPORT COMFORT LAPDOG CAPER. Doc Alpo-San owned the 15 Pomeranians that Porko and his G-R-R-R-L had been sitting in a big two-story dog house in Low Park. The shades were always drawn except for a few inches where the dogs peered out at them coming up the walk with great big bags of kibble. Porko suspected that Dr. Alpo had been assassinated in Northern Manchuria by a gang of Maoist dog-thieving restauranteurs.... He'd been there disguised as an architect while researching a global network of Pomeranian-snatchers....

Thing Street Asylum

*****

Johnny sent Jah Lo See to J. Zeus Murphy's Zombie Crypt Emporium, to see if they had any cheap lap-tops. He instructed her not to buy anything, only to obtain information about what was available. She had already enquired several times, and the answer had always been that they were out. Johnny gave her a loony for coffee on the way back.

He was surprised when she returned a few minutes later and proudly presented him with a heavy cardboard box, before collapsing into an ugly torn chair the springs of which sagged onto the floor.

Johnny peered hopefully into the box. J. Zeus had cheated him again. It was a fossil, a dinosaur, a trilobite that J. Zeus had personally plundered in a midnight raid on the Burgess Shale on his last valium-soaked West Coast tour foraging for Frank Zappa albums.....

Coelacanth's were rocket science....

Been a long time gone....

*****

Moll gave them a bunch of Barbie Dolls for a discount on two large chairs, an orange recliner and a pink armchair. Seraphina arrived to see what Romeo got last week, and was bored by all of it, but remembered he'd told her they were getting some Barbies....

Johnny'd stashed them in the corner, under his old green antimacassar....

He hated going into the cellar to search for Barbies, especially as they were still in the heap of polyethylene garbage bags that Moll had given them, and he didn't know which ones.

It was like opening body bags in the lair of a serial killer....

Dildo Wingnut?

In the semi-darkness by the fuse boxes he grasped tiny heads of hair, tinier pairs of feet. He knew.

It was REX's stash!

The Barbie bag!

He carried it upstairs, torn and gaping....

*****

J. Zeus Murphy set himself up in a swell pad. Rented a loft in the former Vinnie Massive Lampworks.

Vinnie had opened the factory at the beginning of World War I, to supply Dadanian diplomatic missions with Turkish lamps. They were diverted to shell-shock victims.

Vinnie had been disgusted and bored by the old Massive family business; tractors and combines were sadly limited in terms of the opportunities they presented for drag.

Upon the Allied Victory, bored even with this extravagance, he had retired with his fortune to pursue a career in heraldry, as the first native-born and most fantastic Grand Satrap of Dadania. He appeared everywhere, at the opening of parliament or a curling match, buried beneath a ceremonial panoply of tassels and flanges, resembling nothing so much as a Turkish lamp. J. Zeus Murphy was always finding bits of glass, silk cord, etc. in the crevices between his floorboards....

Now he needed furniture, pieces that would make his loft look like the madame's office in a bordello, as well as a home. He especially wanted a large desk or dining table to impress his visitors with while they awaited his always busy self. He would place a computer on it, featuring programs about himself and his numerous projects....

He wanted the Zsa Zsa Special....

*****

Johnny confessed to Trixie. He hated loonies, notwithstanding that he was one himself.

She emphatically agreed. I mean, I hate them too, she clarified.

Today she'd wanted to shove a hypodermic up the ass of a client. He told her to get lost, so she did. Then he took the entire ward, including three members of the staff, hostage. It was a code white situation.

Intensive!

She was blamed for it. For doing what the patient told her to do. For going away....

*****

Sharpshanks started coming three times a day again. Then he'd suddenly appear with 15 or 20 dollars and offer it to Johnny, with a dignified statement. Johnny, I owe you some money. An hour later he'd appear in the doorway, holding his hands together in front of his crotch, twiddling his thumbs and wriggling his sandaled feet. He'd stand like that for a few minutes, not saying anything. Johnny would see his jaw-muscles working....

Romeo observed the routine and said it was strange. To Sharpshanks it was the high finance of J. P. Morgan. Johnny's Thing Store was Crassus Black's Anus Corp. In his mind he was George Soros.

His mind? Johnny knew he'd lost it....

*****

Increasingly, he spent his days in song,
he finally shunned the gradient for music.
He went off track, went crazy in a lyric.
He stammers when he talks; he only sings
among the mad, the ones like him, translated.
The images, the colors, shapes of bodies
are not divided from the wind's afflatus:
Aeolist, Poet, Bedlamite, Parnassian.

C.O.N.S.T.A....

*****

Trixie surprised Johnny sorting dolls, talking dolls. One of them had dark skin and had her hair done up in horns. Asphalt!

Trixie said Johnny should have his own room, for dressing them. A Model Suite....

Romeo told her that Praetorius played with Barbies; he told her to tell him he said so.

Johnny knew. Soon he'd be cutting them out of paper....

*****

A wraith-like dealer passed. He wanted Romeo....

To help him collect his things from some other scoundrel down Thing Street. Who'd mysteriously disappeared. Leaving behind a store full of things and a growing mess of rumors. Everything that anyone had left with him for delivery or repair had been sold to somebody else two or three times. The landlord was going to seize all of it for rent. Nobody knew whose shit was whose anymore.

The dealer called the Thing Street alderman, that great democrat Bizz Kukzinksky, to clean up the mess before it gave the business a bad name.

Romeo pissed himself laughing.

*****

Everyone congregated in Thing's Pork stuffing wieners up their asses under a minnie-skirted equestrian statue of William Lion Mackenzie QUEEN.

For DADANIA DAY.

They'd sucked the British Empire till it fell off and now they were giving Uncle Sammy the treatment....

Or was it vice versa?

*****

A Vinylphile confessed to feeling guilty because he'd stolen a few pieces of sheet music along with his records. The long-lost sketches of Mahler's Tenth!

It would have been bad dharma not to offer him something. He'd come back as an unbreakable 78 and get turned into a flying saucer. He promised as soon as he found a few more records (to steal), to give him a butterscotch.

Johnny started to bring in the things from the sidewalk right in front of the store. The Vinylphile looked through the stacks of records that cluttered the aisle and covered any floor space not already occupied by junky furniture. Half an hour later Johnny had brought in most of the things, but the Vinylphile was still looking. With about thirty albums under his arm he started to make his way slowly toward the front of the store. Johnny was relieved that he was finally going, but when the Vinylphile saw him still working, he headed back into the store, where the records were thickest.

Nothing back here? he asked. Johnny said he wouldn't say that.

Nothing in the way of records? Johnny knew there were thousands. He was beginning to despair of ever going home.

Just tell me when you want to close, the Vinylphile said.

*****

BEAUTIFUL JOE!
A POEMFORTHEDAY about a DOG for JOE

He met him at Worthless World.
The most beautiful picker of them all.
BEAUTIFUL JOE. He called him that. Because it's a DADANIAN CLASSIC, about a DOG....
If you ever want to see a BOY, about a DOG.... Try Worthless World....
Just don't get caught....
They'll ban you in every THING store from Nunavit to Mexico City and beyond. Then where will you go?
You never know who you'll find, but you can be pretty sure he's been USED....
Take Joe, for instance....
It's easy....
His whole life people have been returning him to the store....
Browndale graduate, class of any year....
White Nigger Jew....
Annex Beacon....
Margaret Allwood's Last Love....
He has issues with men....
He had so many fathers, he didn't know what to screw....
Fortunately one of them had a record store, and Joe liked music....
Joe liked records more....
Love Joe, love his Bluenotes....
He grew his fingernails like Howard Hughes so he could feel the scratches in the grooves....
He could probably hear them too....
Edison would have patented Joe's thumb....
And smashed the fingers of his rivals....
Thomas Alva Edison invented The Joe in 1888....
He dropped a stylus on Joe's cylinder....
His BLUE AMBEROL....
Over hill, over dale....
He examined his hairy breast, his smooth legs, his neat feet....
Every guy in Toronto wears size 9 shoes, Joe complained in the Shoe Department of Value Village....
And the WIZARD OF MENLO PARK was PLEASED....
Fuck my TALKING DOLL, he said....
That's my NIGGER, JOE....
Ole BLACK Joe....
After cycling to every THING store in Toronto, which is EVERY STORE IN TORONTO....
Hygiene was never a priority with crazies....
Coonsinger Joe....
The first white nigger jew record star....
Now on DIAMOND DISK.... Only....
Move over George W. Johnson....
Victor Emerson....
China owns your trademarks now....
But not Joe....
The last independent....
But merging fast....

Pioneers of Alienation

He was in the music business. He'll tell you early in the relationship, the way you can't talk to me 5 minutes without realizing I'm a failed prof....

To your HORROR....

(I thought getting a Ph.D. meant I'd never pine for it but I'd never GET RID OF IT EITHER....

So I have to get it out on the table, that dirty scrap of paper between us like a contract....

I'm going to write us down....

I can't help it....)

One of Joe's fathers was the buyer for SAM....

SAM the MAN....

Now Joe's the MAN....

Joe's a FATHER!

That's one father too many. He tells me about his toys. Emails me their pics at 3 in the morning. Beautiful as a Beethoven string quartet - a LATE quartet. Sure it's just stuff, but what BEAUTIFUL STUFF!

He surrounds himself with them. His and hers Italian 45 RPM turntables. Early modern stereos. All expensive in catalogers many of them in MOMA.

Talking machines tell him about the past. When people had jobs and corporations were daring.

I interrupt. You mean CARING?

That TOO! Joe types sobbing.

Before we were sadsacks. Bottom feeders at WORTHLESS WORLD....

Fatty Puff Pie, Joe Goldfinger, Elaine Mighty Muff....

I AM DADANIAN, I type back shouting....

BEAUTIFUL JOE....

NIPPER....

Listening for HIS MASTER'S VOICE....

Edison's goons shoot him....

Stoopid nigger....

I knew you were a risk, Joe gasps dying....

(This is a posthumous release.)

Village Romances were so frustrating....

*****

Doc Hiroshito Hibitchy aka ALPO-SAN and his tragic sudden death from non-consensually fucking his favorite comfort Pomeranian to the strains of TIGHT LIKE THAT as performed by Louis Armstrong and his Jazz Dogs on Columbia LP 69728.... Unfortunately he played it on his ancestral Japanese-Victor Talking Machine.... At more than 78 RPM his life fluid surged into his cock exploding into Chippy like the Orient Express....

E-mails from kennels and dog-shows all across Asia clogged up his mail box.... His precious daughter the dewy flower of the eastern sky Miso Flavor Ramen faxed and phoned and clenched her pearly fists in frustration at his stubborn refusal to answer her increasingly shrill solicitude for money.... But he was D.E.A.D. so what the FUCK could he do about it?

She recalled how when she had barely turned her first trick he gave her the delightful little Fortune Cookie with the incredibly lolling tongue....

*****

A bum paused in front of the store as Johnny brought in his things. Johnny'd seen him before, somewhere. Each time he'd asked him, for bird cages....

He had an affected delivery, as if he listened too much to his own voice. Johnny hadn't had anything to do with birds for years, and it irritated him that the man kept asking, each time explaining what he was looking for with painstaking and unnatural delivery, peering up at him through thick glasses.

He reminded Johnny of a sheep-dog. Early seventies, average height, slightly stocky, round-faced. He wore his dark hair long. He loitered in front of the store in short pants, white socks, a short-sleeved shirt, a straw sun-hat. He carried a package and a canvas bag that obviously held bottles of liquor.

This time he didn't want a bird-cage; he wanted a picture frame. Johnny didn't have one. He started to describe a picture he owned. Johnny wasn't interested.

Somebody saw it and offered him two hundred dollars for it. He wouldn't take it. He knew what it was worth. He said he'd purchased it nearly forty years ago directly from the artist.... He offered to show it to Johnny right there but he wasn't interested....

The man said if he was ever broke he could take it into any art store and get five hundred dollars for it; they'd get a thou-thou-

He staggered and hit his head on the curb before Johnny could catch him. Fucking bum. He was probably brain-damaged. A young man stopped and helped Johnny get him off the road, so he wouldn't get run over again and again on Thing Street. Another young man called an ambulance on his cell-phone. The operator must have started her catechism. Johnny heard the young man say he didn't think drugs were involved, except alcohol. Somebody told the young man to tell the operator to fuck off. He was dead.

The ambulance arrived anyway, with two attendants. They covered the corpse, and loaded it onto a stretcher.

He left his things behind on the curb. One was a soggy canvas bag full of broken liquor bottles. An attendant tossed it in after the corpse, with a loud chink.

*****

The other one was a brown paper package tied up with string. It was the picture he'd wanted to show Johnny. He unwrapped it.

He recognized the rapt-looking farmer standing beside the rustic house, the shed with the guts of the turbine laid out on the lawn, the smoke not dispersing naturally but contracting into an impossible inverted V....

The Villeneuve!

The collector saw it....

He pissed himself laughing.

*****

Romeo didn't want to play pool with Jack Was Every Inch a (One-Eyed) Sailor anymore.

Today Jack lost, as usual. But he threw a tantrum about it. He cursed the pool gods, and luck.

Why do you have all the luck? he demanded.

Romeo said he was a better player; that's all.

That made Jack Was Every Inch a (One-Eyed) Sailor throw a billiard ball across the room; it ricocheted against the wall, then bounced all the way down stairs.

Jack Was Every Inch a (One-Eyed) Sailor protested. Romeo just didn't care, did he?

He didn't think that had anything to do with it. He was supposed to beat him.

They were playing a game.

*****

Coelacanths swam waddled paddled floundered up to the window and gaped in. If they'd opened their traps any wider, he'd have got dizzy. He'd have been swallowed like Jonah. Already he felt sea-sick, imagining their breath. Not that he had to for very long. Some low-grade was sure to shove his ugly mug in Johnny's, sooner or later....

*****

Sometimes they giggled to themselves at the door, or laughed outright on the way in, like they bought his shit to humor him....

The shit he had! Mountains of cracked 78s. Scratchy vinyl LPs. Al Hirt plays music for strings and s/trumpets. Foxy sheet music. Always, by Raymondo Hardalot.

Some old dinosaur thought he needed a bigger store. I don't know, Johnny said.

You must be an awfully rich man, the fossil insisted. He was wearing the insignia of the OLD FARTS OF PARNASSUS COLLEGE on his blue polyester blazer.

How so? Johnny wondered.

You must be an awfully rich man, if you don't know what you have.

All I have is debts, Johnny said; the fucker didn't know how true.

He didn't know anything.

He didn't need to. He was Ulysses S. Leash.

*****

Pioneers of Alienation

They got depressed when they couldn't find price-tags on anything. They had to ask Johnny, who always jacked up the prices as much as he could get, that fucker.

An enormous green garbage truck stank up Thing Street. It lumbered down Dung, heading straight for Romeo's thousand-dollar plate-glass aquarium window. One day it would smash right through.

Releasing schools of coelacanths!

Romeo took bets when, after working out the odds.

Not if. When!

*****

He expected Johnny to bring all the vinyl out to him, armful by crushingly heavy armfull. While he sat in his chair, and licked every one. For the beauty of it hot, fresh out of the inner-sleeve. Cunilingus for senile dements. Then he had the nerve to offer hot and sweaty Johnny a presucked butterscotch. Fucker.

His wanted to break the records over his head....

*****

Edison shot him. From his dog pound in the sky, Joe looks DOWN on us.

He thinks Lynn Crosby's hot!

He misses the junkyard. He figures if we'd buy his THINGS he'd get out of purgatory.

He can turn tricks, in the grave.

He can't see his ass behind him, but he can smell it.

He can chase his own tail.

He's been picking stiffs all his dog's life. It's his TURN to be CHOSEN.

He'd been the OFFICE BULLY.

He'd bullied BUCKTOOTH VINCE once too often.

Now he can strain his own CLINGERS.

He wishes somebody'd buy his THINGS so he could break this vicious cycle of tail and clingers.

He could get out of pawn and BUY MORE THINGS.

Where was Elaine Mighty Muff? Joe Goldfinger?

Fag Johnny?! A DOG LOVER!

Grrrrr!

Lynn Crosby? Hipster trust-fund baby? IRON KIBBLE BOWL....

Someone like her? HER!!!

Johnny's phone barked like a blunt VICTROLA....

He got the message.

Edison figured that was what happened when you gave dogs free will. They went DIGITAL and turned GAY! Their WANTED poster in the headquarters of EMI. On T-shirts!

Analogue descended like warm rain.

Claudio Muzio lay down with the Coonsinger George W. Johnson.

Who needed hydro? Wasn't it Detroit EDISON?

The light dimmed....

The internet was dying! Was anyone buying?

NOBODY, Columbia Record....

*****

Sharpshanks nervously extended a twenty like he thought he was Marcus Tullius Cicero, that world-class stoic loud-mouth, offering his neck to the barbarians....

A week's pin money from Thing Street Asylum.

Johnny hesitated, but he took it.

Anyone who knew him even remotely would have immediately attributed his hesitancy entirely to greed.

He hadn't made his ten percent.

*****

Jah Lo See had a dossier full of extensive three-way correspondence between herself, her social worker (so-called!), and Citizen Hearse, the CEO and Sole Proprietor of Thing Street Psychomes.

Thing Street Asylum

She accused Citizen Hearse of all things: of running a chain of bordellos which he filled with women he smuggled into the country from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, seduced, drugged, exploited, then sensationalized in the syndicated columns of his various organs; of maintaining a Thing Street-based empire of street drugs and casual sex, sometimes referred to as the jiggy-jigg; of corrupting Thing Street Psychomes and turning the inmates against her by spreading rumors about her bad morals and worse mental and physical hygiene, etc.

She brought news of a terrible quarrel with the perfidious Citizen Hearse. How he should have known what he was getting into when he rented to her. She was a mental case, an epileptic; if he argued with her, she'd have a SEIZURE.

She had to be treated with therapeutic courtesy at all times....

*****

Sharpshanks came three times a day.

He'd borrowed a twony every time, but by the third time Johnny wasn't in the mood to give him more than a loony. He assumed his conventional pose, holding his hands below his waist and gazing at his feet. Johnny noticed that today they were not clad in the cheap sandals he had seen him in yesterday, but in shiny, old, expensive-looking leather Dix. He would wait and work the muscles of his jaw, as if he expected Johnny to automatically give him what he knew he wanted; Johnny refused to oblige him to that extent.

Jah Lo See said he wanted the money for a subway ride. Johnny said, a subway ride costs more.

She laughed; a subway ride meant jiggy-jig.

He was saving up....

*****

Romeo said there was no darkness in his life.

Johnny thought that wasn't true; life was always dark....

It was a waste of electricity....

Anyway, there'd soon be plenty, if he didn't pay this, he said, handing him the Hydro Bill (3rd Request)....

Romeo was reading a Hearse newspaper feature about a man sentenced to thirty years hard labor for throwing a stupid Pomeranian onto the Hardener Distressway, where it was immediately martyred by an onrushing garbage truck....

*****

The headline shouted, MONSTER!

Wolf, the beloved Pomeranian of $CAMH's world-famous trans surgeon, Dr. Richard (6DICK) Dire, may be the first Pomeranian, indeed the first DOG of any kind, to be honoured by inclusion in the DSM. Unfortunately, the honour will have to be POSTHUMOUS, as the frisky fellow was PUT DOWN, because of an acquired taste for fresh nuts and DICK!

What began as an innocent fondness for table scraps, ended on the OPERATING TABLE, or beneath it, where all unknown to the good doctor, Wolf discovered the slop bucket. Cock-a-doodle, he said, but quietly - not wanting to be noticed!

It wasn't till weeks later that the doc noticed the discrepancy between operations performed and specimens collected. Was someone dicking with the account? Were terrorists squirrelling DICK away, millimetre by millimetre, to make an ATOMIC BUM? No, $CAMH already had one....

Then he noticed. WOLF was all pumped up on steroids like a PIT BULL! Hel-lo?!

No doubt he'll give his you-know-what to science in the shape of $CAMH. Actually they'll get his YELP too, after he's formed. It's wrong to steal dicks, especially from $CAMH. Be advised, anyone who steals dick, gets - DICK!

Poor Wolf, we'll miss the little pecker....

Johnny laughed; he thought it was ridiculous.

Romeo said, it was! He should have got LIFE.

Romeo liked Pomeranians. It was things he hated....

*****

Things passing. Wanting to know, How's business?

Could be better.

*****

50s Chick was depressed. She said hello to Johnny while he adjusted some things on the sidewalk outside his eponymous Thing Store. He asked her to come in, but she said she wasn't in the mood. Come in anyway, he said; maybe that would get her in the mood. He was joking....

Once inside, she started to explain what was the matter. She rented with a friends, but the neighborhood was dangerous. She and her girl friend had already been solicited. A shop-keeper said, They were fools to live there....

She was twenty-two, and she'd never had a decent place to live....

Johnny said, if her friends couldn't find a replacement in a few weeks then it just confirmed, the apartment was uninhabitable....

But they were her friends, she insisted (over and over)....

Yeah, yeah....

*****

50s Chick was more distracted than ever. She said she was auditioning.

For a movie? Johnny asked.

Well, actually, she clarified, to be the host of the weekly horror-show.

Unfortunately, she wouldn't get the part, because the boss was Citizen Hearse, and he only liked chicks like THIS:

She demonstrated, panting, shaking her tits....

*****

Miss Nazimova
Really jazzed'em over
She made a big improvement
On every pretty movement....

Dancing at that moving picture ball....

*****

She came in to look around, but she kept glancing at her watch, because she had to make a hair appointment before the audition. She thought maybe a new hair-cut would work on that fucker.

Johnny showed her photos of someone who'd died, committed suicide, and totally TRANSFORMED his life, because his personal things, boyhood photos and report-cards, had gone up for auction. Nobody bought them. Romeo just picked them up off a vacant lot and threw them into the bottom of his van, before speeding off to meet his floozy....

Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre came upon them by accident that afternoon, when Porko was unloading....

She started to cry....

She wasn't prone to tears, but there was his skate key.

Porko had several, just like it....

50s Chick was especially amused by his wedding photos, in which he never smiled. She noticed a boyhood photo of him in pink gymn shorts, and observed that he probably was secretly queer all his life. That would explain the unhappy wedding photos. It must have been a nightmare. If it was the way he looked, it was the worst day of his life, a total fucking nightmare so bad he couldn't believe it was really happening....

Johnny suddenly felt uncomfortable.

He showed her another picture that he considered interesting. In a polo sweater, he was stabbing the family Christmas tree with a butcher knife. 50s Chick said, Too bad it hadn't been decorated yet.

Johnny said she needed a persona for her audition.

She said she had one, HERSELF. But she needed a narrative to go along with it.

Johnny thought she'd come to the wrong guy....

She'd say she was the wife of the man in the picture, but she left him, after he went mad and trashed their Christmas tree.

He hated Christmas! Now she was looking for a job....

Thing Street Asylum

*****

The Curse of Mental Health was $CAMH Psychiatry. They'd built themselves The Comppund, Thing Street and surrounded it with condos (so they were finally part of the neighborhood) whence they dumped on mad people in the street s of toronto - and from their #substandard #clinics where the RNs tipple your pin money after hours but won't clean the faeces off their window.

So here's one from streetphotography for CEO Trixie Zane and Dr Rat Brain over at Krembil Neuroinformatics. Here's one for the schizophrenics they're trying to prevent and replace with stupid change agents babbling about stigma - without knowing what schizophrenia is or understanding it's a way of life and that a world without it would be a concentration camp.

Merry Xmas you stupid evil nazi fucks.

HEIL SATAN!

*****

Johnny saw him using the pay-phone, frequented by pimps and whores and regularly sabotaged by neighborhood vigilantes. Average height, medium build, well-groomed.

Johnny recognized him, the writer who read Bukowski; he was growing a beard (again)....

Johnny and Romeo chatted outside while the young man browsed through boxes of records that filled the corridor between piles of things.

The young man asked him how his day had been.

Johnny said O.K. How was his?

He said it O.K., but he was late because he'd just talked to his father for the first time in two years. He thought he'd keep in touch; maybe he'd write.

Johnny thought of writing his own family. He wouldn't, because letters had a way of staying around and reappearing later where you least expected them, or wanted....

The man said he meant he would write; he wasn't recommending it to Johnny.

Sorry, Johnny said. Selfish pervert, always thinking of his relations....

*****

They delivered a pine kitchen set to a young woman in a tiny bed-sitter....

Romeo observed how crazy things were. She would never be happier than she was right then, in that tiny apartment with her hundred and fifty dollar table, but they still wanted nine-piece mahogany dining sets, more and more....

Johnny said, that's why he was full of shit. He spent the whole day convincing others to buy it....

Actually, Romeo pointed out, he'd been playing pool with Jack. Shit was Johnny's job....

*****

Someone from the Zombie Crypt Store asked Johnny,

What's new? Johnny glared at him. He should know better. Johnny only sold old shit.

Johnny said he was closing.

The whole Thing Store? Forever? He faked concern.

No. Right now. For now. Johnny grabbed the enormous yellow fanback and headed inside.

Can I help you with that chair?

No, Johnny said. Fuck off.

*****

The old Vinylphile said he wanted to look at those records he was looking at yesterday. Johnny said he couldn't find them. They were scattered all over the store, or sold.

Already? the man seemed surprised. He wanted to check the box of slightly water-damaged records that Johnny had stashed under the china cabinet just inside the door; he thought maybe those were the ones....

They weren't. Johnny started to explain that you couldn't look at the same record twice, you couldn't even listen to it, but he stopped himself. What was the philosophical point?

Then again, maybe if you didn't look at them the right way the first time, you were cursed to keep looking at them forever.

He found six that looked familiar, that he thought he wanted. He wanted a bargain, because they were old.

Johnny reminded him. That's what was good about them. Whoever heard of a Vinylphile wanting NEW records?

*****

Citizen Hearse was in Friday evening and spent an hour looking through old photo albums. Johnny supposed he was discovering something of their previous owner's spirit.

Johnny had looked through the same albums and concluded that something bad had happened to their owner, a man not much older than himself (if he was still alive).

Johnny found diplomas, report-cards, bank statements. It was possible that he he'd altered his identity and discarded all these traces of his past, but putting the traces up for auction, wouldn't have been the best way....

Citizen Hearse sat down heavily in one of Praetorius's big, maroon-upholstered fan-backs, just inside the door. He thought he was dead, and hadn't had a good death. His wedding pictures....

Yes, Johnny completed his thought; you never saw him smile....

Citizen Hearse said it was as if he couldn't believe he was getting married, but it just kept happening....

Johnny said he had found a lot of self-help books about coping with illness, and death; he'd also found a book from Alcoholics Anonymous, autographed by many well-wishers. He thought someone close to him, died first...

Citizen Hearse thought he despised himself, so he killed himself....

*****

RIP Beautiful Joe!

You're more than just a PIECE to me. You're a racist homophobic JEWISH QUEEN!

*****

On the Milquetoast Broadcasting Company. Whimpy Soother's Mo(u)rning Show ironically called FRESH AIR, considering it consisted mainly of smog reports and old farts, like the universally respected Dr. Ulysses Leash, gassing about his glorious career as the Liberal Humanist Mental Hygiene Registrar of Cartoon U.

Rube Goldberg was his protege. To think he could have prevented JOHNNY!

*****

Terrible heat and humidity among the things. Every morning Johnny unpacked the doorway to get inside.

First he removed a large plastic urn and some smalls (an ugly clock face made from pebbles set in resin, two crudely turned brown and white marble candlesticks from Mexico, etc.) from a burl walnut hall table on top of a converted TV cabinet; subsequently, he removed the hall table and the TV cabinet, in that order.

His routine was determined by space, and by gravity.

Like everything, he considered.

It was like coring a rotten apple, or uncapping a constipated ass-hole. In the evening, the process was reversed....

Stuff it in! Cram it in!

*****

The radio on low. Lunatics milling around. A motor-cycle sputtering down Thing Street.

In the morning he went on his usual walk up Lansdowne, past the flops and No Frillies to Worthless World. They didn't have any interesting CDs, so he walked east a few blocks on Spoor, to the Bluecoats.

One of the ladies in a blue smock told him. That morning someone had donated his whole collection.

He saw where they'd got tired of trying to sort it in the bins, and instead had just poured it out onto the floor in heaps.

He looked through several piles. Lots of rock, but he wasn't buying any. He found a DVD about The Broadway Musical. With his senior's descount (10%), it cost less than $3.

Something a cheap old fart would buy....

Like him? Him!

So he did....

He walked back to Thing and Cock. Passed the beer store, the liquor store. The usual crowd, doing Springsteen impressions.

He emerged near the Library, the resort of homeless people everywhere.

Very inclusive!

He borrowed a book about stress that was on hold for him. Then he walked home.

He couldn't avoid it any longer: he wanted to kill Garrison Keillor.

*****

He did nothing again today.

Maybe he was depressed. His crack-pot sea captain said he was a classic case of depression, deep and chronic. Like the sea. Romeo would have known.

He didn't do much. He listened to the Sunday programs of the Milquetoast Broadcasting Corporation, most of which had already started to nauseate him weeks ago.

They were the digital, liberal version of Sunday Funnies. Unfunny, that is. But senescent, so he should have enjoyed them.

Like Garrison Keillor, who wasn't really senile just acting like it. In other words....

A con, a crook, a mountebank pitching nostalgic misrepresentation of American culture as quack medicine, quick relief from the looming apocalypse.

They were (rigged) game shows where politicians were quizzed on current events they caused or (more likely) failed to prevent.

Johnny especially hated a panel of political commentators even whose leftists had recently made headlines themselves by exploiting indigent writers (of all people).

Late in the day he finally managed to go for a walk. He went to the Buffer Inn Mall, to the Dollar Store where he bought a cheap blanket for his cat. At the No Frillies he bought a frozen lasagna, and some cheese on sale.

*****

He went on a long walk to Vagina Road. T-shirts and tofu were cheapest in Chinese ghettos. Vagina Road between Dungass and Thing was the oldest Chinese ghetto in Dadania.

He felt right at home, like he could die right there.

There was something else he needed, first. O, yeah. Flea powder for Toby, at least if they were what was making him itch. They seemed to be going away. It was typically feckless of him to do nothing but still be wondering, after the problem was nearly over. Maybe it was something else entirely. Maybe it was nerves. Good thing his cat was tough.

He came to $CAMH for Cats on Dungass, and entered. There was a pleasant, buxom secretary behind the desk. They greeted one another, and Johnny showed her a photo of his cat's ass. Like some drunk in a bar.

Scabs were visible, through the parted fur. They'd broken out 10 days ago. He wondered if they could have been caused by fleas.

She said she couldn't really say, based on a picture.

He pressed. He knew she wanted him to buy a consultation, with the Vet.

If she had to hazard a guess?

She said yes, they could have been caused by fleas.

Then how much was flea medicine?

She said about 100 dollars, for 6 months. For 6 doses, in other words. Plus another 50 for an examination, because it was prescription medication, and they couldn't prescribe it without an examination.

Without even knowing for sure it was fleas? Why, his Lipitor © cost less!

Well, it looks like it could be fleas, she said a little more positively now. Reviewing the picture on Johnny's camera.

Meanwhile the doctor had joined her at the counter. He'd been lurking in the shadows the whole time. At least he looked like a doctor, with heavy horn-rimmed glasses and a blue smock. He looked vaguely Portuguese, very dark hair and full lips.

Would you agree, Johnny asked him.

O, he protested, I couldn't say. Not without an examination.

Couldn't, or wouldn't. Not without 50 bucks!

So Johnny offered him a penny for his thoughts, knowing pennies were banned. No joy in heaven, or pennies in Dadania.

But what do you think? He pressed him, but thought wasn't free in Dadania. Or anything else.

Is it mainly around the base of the tail?

Yes!

That's generally a good sign.

Of what? Fleas? His cat's chances?

Is there anything cheaper I could get? What about Harz?

There's a reason people pay more for some treatments than others.

O, yeah?

Ours work!

Kitty Love doesn't work?

Have you tried it?

Yes! It's too soon to tell....

You're lucky your cat didn't throw up, and choke to death on its vomit.

Isn't there something else I could do? That was cheap, he meant.

What would you use? On yourself!

Ah! Now it was out in the open. He wanted him to off himself. With cyanide, or Harz flea medicine. At least it was cheaper....

He saw where the Doctor was headed, but he was on a PENSION. His meds were free. Clozapine and Lipitor were free, but flea medication cost MONEY.

If he wasn't covered, he probably wouldn't use anything. There wasn't anything anyway, for senility....

Too bad the cat wasn't on a PENSION. Maybe he should get the cat on Welfare, so at least he'd be covered....

The Doctor assured him. He wasn't headed anywhere. Nowhere, in fact. He only meant to suggest Benadryl, for the cat. For Johnny, coconut oil might help. If it wasn't too late.

Thanks. He'd tell Garrison.

*****

Jah Lo See entered, complaining about Citizen Hearse.

Johnny said Citizen Hearse had been in just yesterday, he asked about her. She was his number one money-maker. He was furious because she wasn't on the corner.

Jah Lo See said Johnny had an over-active imagination; he should have been a writer....

Or a psychiatrist....

Giving a lesson one afternoon....

*****

Trixie strolling down Thing Street. Like she thought the neighborhood was a part of HER....

She asked Johnny for permission to use his washroom. Like she thought she was being ironic....

Looking for drugs?

She and Praetorius were looking for a kitchen-table; they were tired of eating in bed.....

Then he got busy with a customer who wanted the price of a shadow-box.

When he returned to the front of the store, Bruce was sprawled in the ugly maroon-upholstered armchair. He was pale. He looked DEAD. He gazed around him.

This store sure is sad, he said.

A DISASTER.... For the Aerospace Program....

All in her ASS....

Edison Amberols....

*****

Thing Street Asylum

Johnny met Porko the next morning, on Thing Street. He said Frankie and Billie were quarreling over who let Johnny into Emile Durkheim House.

Max the Butcher would never have rented to a faggot, like Johnny Boy. Especially not to Johnny himself!
Billie passed Frankie the fat joint.
No, man! Frankie exhaled. It was Porko! Frankie passed Billie the joint.
Why did you ever rent to that fuck? Billie demanded.
I'd never have rented to that piece of shit, Porko avowed. He was here already!

Johnny realized. Porko was only telling him this to let him know. He wouldn't have rented to him. After all Johnny'd done for him, too!

Setting him up in his old penthouse at Velma's, getting him the superintendent's job when Max went to Criminology School, etc., etc....

So Johnny allied himself to Bruce, down the hall. After he crashed, he used a cane. He believed in human rights. They got him a Package.

Then he became psychiatric advocate. He sat on so many committees, his ass atrophied. He took Citizen Hearse a thousand times, before the Rental Board. Each time The Hearse wore a different dress. He had a thousand. He always said, he was his own best secretary.

He always won, but the Rental Board bore an uncanny resemblance to Thing Street Asylum's DEFLOWERMENT COUNCIL. Possibly because it was comprised of the same crooks: Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre, Trixie Zane, Max the Butcher....

Bruce's greatest triumph was retaining the food allowance. Normals, that is everyone south of the Dadanian border, would be shocked to know....

The TRUTH!

What shifts they made - TO EAT!

Lied, cheated, stole, embezzled. Said they were crazier than they were, then went even crazier than they said. In a country where they filled gravel pits with surplus food, they needed a food allowance....

Everybody got it, so Alapaloozah decided. It must be ABOLISHED!

It was one thing at the United Nations to indicate generous food allowance progarms, and with an effort he could understand his serfs occasionally even needing them, but actually USING them? Wasn't that TAKING AVANTAGE of the SYSTEM!

Not just incidentally, the Food Allowance amounted to several hundred dollars a month. The shelter portion was $350 and the normal food allowance $200. The cheapest cell in Emile Durkheim House rented for $650. That meant one had to spend most of the Special Food Allowance on RENT.

Citizen Hearse should've awarded Bruce the Nobel Prize. For getting HIM that Food Allowance....

*****

Johnny told him Porko was a fake. How he scoffed at the U.N.'s Charter, while enjoying more rights than all of them put together! He even got a package....

For DISINTEGRATIVE PERSONALITY DISORDER.

*****

In the 19th century
they discovered
the more they built asylums
and talked about curing people,
the faster they filled asylums,
the crazier people became.

Now, in the 21st century,
$CAMH was talking big again
about curing people,
while hinting that there were more and more
people needing to be cured....

What had happened? What went on?

Pioneers of Alienation

Wasn't it REASONABLE
to suspect that

$CAMH either had AMNESIA or,
more likely, $CAMH knew BETTER,
and WASN'T LETTING ON;

$CAMH was making business for itself,
inventing madness while
ostensibly
decrying its growth;

$CAMH had invented THE CURE,
just as it invented THE MADNESS,
neither of which was real,
except as DELUSIONS were REAL,
the collective delusions of a self-serving
corporate culture;

$CAMH, for reasons that hardly
need stating, had figuratively
turned its corporate BACKSIDE
on genuine MADNESS, because
as $CAMH really knew,

REAL MADNESS was INCURABLE,
and while there was both GLORY
and LUCRE in CURING,
there was LITTLE of EITHER
in CARING....

More reasons, why $CAMH.
$CAMH needed to forget
about TRANSFORMATIONS,
and to REMEMBER HISTORY.
$CAMH needed to CHANGE,
to CHANGE their name, to CHANGE
their language, to CHANGE
their ENTIRE ETHOS,
which flew blindly
against HISTORY,
opposed, and insulted,
HUMAN NATURE, HUMAN FREEDOM.

*****

He must have had it bad. Johnny looked it up in the DSM. It didn't exist! Adults couldn't catch it. It was for 5 year olds!

Then he remembered. Porko told him he met the shrink at Fort Meds. A family friend introduced them. He said the shrink bought him ice-cream cones, and made him wear torn shorts. He hadn't believed him.

Stoopid fuck! Now he got it!

Infantilism! They were in it! Together!

They'd shared cones! He'd let the Cecil finish his, and suck it dry!

That's what you did, to get a package!

Bruce was furious! HE was the mental cripple of Emile Durkheim House! He had the PARESIS real bad!

He believed in HUMN RIGHTS....

*****

Thing Street Asylum

Johnny barely recognized him, waiting for the Ground Zero Bus. Perhaps he recognized him, but he didn't want to believe it.

It was him....

Porko startled him. So old, so soon!

He said, Hel-low Johnny! In the phony, sing-song voice he reserved for him and some clients. He was getting back from his grandmotther's funeral. Actually, funeral wasn't the word....

Viewing?

Yes, that's it! That explained the white shirt and the tie. Nobody wore ties any more, except him.

He said he wasn't getting any work from Citizen Hease, at The Sands. Car hops didn't make much, anyway....

Johnny figured he was saying that so he wouldn't ask for the money he owed him. He wanted Johnny to wait for his cheque, at the end of the month. Like everyone else.

They'd be lining up down Thing Street to Emile Durkheim's Twinned Tower, around the corner to Lake Hogtarry, to the Circus at Funnyside Pavillion....

They'd stay, for the Clown Show....

He didn't have anything to read, he complained. He'd been re-reading back-issues of Rolling Stone. He was needy!

The Edwardian attributes of Emile Durkheim loomed before them, like a battered face. Johnny reminded him that the bed-bugs had broken out again, and the lock was sticky. He told Elmo, and Elmo told him to tell Porko. He didn't want him to tell Bruce, because Bruce had contacted Night Court. A front, for Citizen Hearse! He'd use the bugs as an excuse to quarantine everything with day-glo yellow police tape and confiscate their property. They'd be deported to one of his Testing Grounds for Disaffected and Alienated Youth, and other experiments that didn't work out.

Porko offered to loan him his vacuum. For the lock, he recommended graphite. For the rest, he suggested he butt out. He did, against the attributes....

*****

When not arguing over who let Johnny in, everyone accused everyone else of being the first to introduce bed-bugs into Emile Durkheim House. It was like trying to identify Patient Zero.

It was an obsession about first things, among last things. That explained Johnny's Thing Store.

The ideal scapegoat was someone who'd moved away. Him they could blame with impunity. The runner-up was someone on the Beastly side, where they were all degenerates.

When Trixie's cupboards collapsed one night, Krakpotkin and Porko heard the explosion on the other side of the building. They thought another cop car had crashed into the ATTRIBUTES.

They ran over to help, but Krakpotkin's only remark to the traumatized Trixie was a warning that she better not have bugs...

Krakpotkin liked to tell everyone it was all about communication, whatever IT was. Porko said NO, IT was EMPATHY.

Krakpotkin didn't have any.

*****

They gathered like fruit-flies around the new intercom at the Thing Street door. It was in a white plaster and stainless steal box nailed to the Edwardian Attributes. Johnny'd doubted that it would work with a cell phone.

Porko demonstrated. He keyed in Johnny's apartment number, and his cell-phone rang. It was ALIVE!

Elmo figured it would reduce the number of times the Tibetans' girlfriends pressed his buzzer by mistake. Imagine! Pressing some poor old fuck's buzzer for SEX....

More voices, on the landing. Bruce, enlisting Carlotta against Citizen Hearse. He objected to paying the $.35 phone charge every time somebody buzzed his apartment. Before, it was free!

Johnny pointed out. Before, it didn't even work.

Now look, Bruce remonstrated. Say you're having a heart attack, you need artificial resuscitation, the ambulance is downstairs, but your phone's just run out of money!

Johnny thought he could do better than that. Say, he'd even bought a new phone card on his way home. He was feeling poorly, so first he phoned for the ambulance. That exhausted his account. The phone died. He started to load the card, he was right in middle of the 16-digit secret number, when he died too. Clutching his chest, choking, as the ambulance crew dialed his phone again, and again, right outside the door. Too late.

They leapt back into their vehicle and rode off whooping, as the phone card fluttered to the floor from his stiffening hand. He'd never use it again. Rigor mortis was setting in, and he was stiffer than ever.

He was hard....

So ironic....

It was weeks before Porko'd check in on him, weeks of clients pinching their noses, crossing themselves every time they descended the dark-varnished stairs, murmuring....

It was him....

He watched as Carlotta, in the middle of his harangue, retreated behind her dark-varnished door and closed it softly but securely against any possible intruders, specifically themselves....

Bruce stared at Johnny, open-mouthed. To think, Bruce got a package....

It should've been Johnny....

Meanwhile, Bruce had other lawsuits pending before Night Court.

He'd signed up half a dozen clients to sue Citizen Hearse for back-interest on the last month's rent they'd deposited with him back in the YEAR ONE. For most of that time, the P/Bigge Banks had paid 0% interest, and the clients had moved at least half a dozen times, from one cell to another just like it but always slightly more expensive. Of course, they'd never remembered to increase their deposit. Decades later, they owed him!

It would all come out, in Night Court....

He was a Mental Hell ADVOCATE....

He believed in HUMAN RIGHTS....

For Citizen Hearse!

*****

Her Edsel screeched to a halt in front of Johnny's Thing Store. 50s Chick got out. She was stunningly attired in one of Trixie's tight, bright-red cocktail dresses ; it complemented her tight, bright red hair.

Thing Street bars were littered with Trixie's cast-offs from Mental Hell Month, most of which wound up in the Vintage Store where Mitzi worked....

She'd come straight from Court.

She asked if Johnny would mind if she came into the store and sat down for a few minutes. He said that was fine.

Her junkie landlady told her that morning that she was renting a room to a bitch with a big dog. She was going to slap it with a restraining order, before it ate Slim, her cat.

Johnny said don't be too sure.

Do you mean you think Slim will kick the dog's ass?

Probably, Johnny said. Cats often did, unless it was a pit-bull.

I love pit-bulls; they get such bad press. She started to comb her hair in the maroon-upholstered chair....

It was so hot, I simply had to take a cab, but I only had 5 dollars so he had to stop in front of the store....

He didn't ask how she managed to catch an Edsel. He was playing a Billie Holiday CD.

Mitzi immediately recognized her....

Johnny said he got it last night, which was perverse because it was Sunday, the one night when most of the record stores were closed, but he found it in a bargain bin for five dollars....

Mitzi said it was incredible how young things would pay 25 dollars for a singer who couldn't even sing but not pay 5 for Billie Holiday, who sang better than anyone....

Johnny said it took an effort to get off Thing Street even for one night. He had an incredibly shitty life, stuck in that Thing Store seven days a week, right in the middle of Thing Street.

At the same time he thought Thing Street was the truth that the rest of the world was denying.

Madness and death....

Thing Street was the future, because it was dying too, only a little faster, a lot more visibly, than the rest of Hogtown....

Being nearly over made it more alive.

The way of the future, Mitzi guffawed. Actually, she said, hers and Johnny's ideas pretty much coincided....

Thing Street was purgatorial, Johnny said....

Totally purgatorial, Mitzi agreed. She kind of liked it. But now it looked like she had to move somewhere else. Last night her boyfriend told her, he was moving....

To Timbuktu! Not Constantinople....

Her life was falling apart....

Her favorite movie was Hitchcock's Rope. She loved that New York apartment. Jimmy Stewart was her favorite actor.

Johnny had a fantasy. A remake of Hitchcock's Rope with the murderous faggots replaced by a couple of dykes played by Mitzi and one of her butch-grrl flat-mates. They'd murder Butch at the start of the movie, for moving to Timbuktu....

How can I have a boyfriend, if I'm a Lesbian? Mitzi wanted to know....
You became one, after he decided to move. The trauma turned you into a dyke....
I get it. I just love that apartment....

*****

Elliott was evicted on March 7, by a policeman and the resident doctor, McLaren, on the orders of the Rev. Dr. Parsons.

This episode must have been embarrassing, because he presents it indirectly, in the letter of a supporter, who regrets that Elliott consented to leave the Home, at the request of a policeman.

He was evicted, on the toe of the policeman's boot....

For the Annual Meeting on March 21, 1903, he was late, [h]aving to bail Jane Dunwood out of jail (5).

Instead of the Bishop who normally presided, he found the Mayor in the Chair. This was obviously collusion between church and state. Also between legislature and executive, as the committee flattered him, and he flattered them back.

One can feel Elliott's outrage at the social forces arrayed against him:

> It is anything but dignified for a Mayor to smile as our Mayor smiled, but of course mayors and influential things run well together and are privileged things in society! Oh, society! Thou slave driver! (6)

Next he'd be raving about Star Chamber, Archive, and Asylum....

However one needn't go farther than the basement of the Gerstein Library of the mighty U of Titz for copies of the Executive Committee's Annual Report:

> The care which the inmates receive, and the general appearance of comfort which continues to exist, are always matters of satisfaction to the staff, and the Management is to be congratulated on the excellent standard it maintains.... The inmates must at all times show proper respect to the Managers and the Matron, and a strict regard for the rules and regulations of the institution. They are also urged to cultivate kind and cheerful dispositions, thereby making a happy Home, while the poor suffering patients are called upon to cultivate kindness and cheerfulness, and to make a happy Home. (2)

Scraping and bowing, while beaming like NIGGERS! Hogtown the Golden! Ruled by pointy-headed emigre alien carpet-baggers from Osgoode Hall.

What a Happy HELL HOUSE!

*****

Eddie the Shortener was already fully-dressed in earth-toned tweeds, seated behind his comfortable roll-top desk, boning up on invasive surgical techniques while fondly examining his collection of 19th-century clamps, forceps, prepuce-guards and cock-rings....

Nothing like it, to work up an appetite before breakfast....

For eggs....

Because Eddie never liked kids much, seeing himself as MORGIE THE BABY-STALKER was the most natural thing in the world....

Those invasive surgical techniques came in handy too....

*****

Romeo returned with stories about the professor whose books they were selling. There'd been something about him.

Johnny said he thought he knew.

It wasn't nice....

Of course not, Johnny wanted to say. How could it be?

Dildo Wingnut! His old advisor. The worst cock-sucker at MONTAGE U.

That was BAD!

*****

Pioneers of Alienation

A children's aid lawyer pulled up with his latest ho in an enormously powerful SPORTS UTILITY VEHICLE.

Nattering about how much he liked some shit Johnny gave him to read. Said he loved the part about homosexuality, so well-researched.

Yeah, Johnny said. Lived experience. He would know.

He wished the lawyer would shut the fuck up and buy something, like a good client. He usually bought old industrial-strength work-tables, metal cabinets, and dysfunctional office chairs.

He especially wanted him to buy the Westinghouse roaster he'd been looking at, with the glass trays in the top part that made him think of embryos and Morgenthaler, the Abortionist...

Johnny wanted to tell him about Dildo and his secret stash, but there was no point snitching on a corpse....

Even if it was ambulatory....

*****

Moll wanted Romeo to trade her a small dining table for a table that she had in her weird penthouse high atop the Thing Street Astoria.

Romeo said he didn't normally do that; he didn't normally do anything, but he had enough tables.

Moll insisted, it was a great table.

Romeo asked, is it old? She didn't realize, he was acting like a customer, a client. It was too hard to call, and he didn't care.

She said it was ancient; it had a wooden top.

Romeo guessed it was pressboard. He finally agreed to trade, but at Moll's he immediately saw it was unsellable; a Formica and chrome monstrosity....

Romeo couldn't imagine what she did with all the chairs. Maybe she fixed them up and flipped them to the things she sold curtains to....

*****

On the MBC....

Susquehannah Mooday, raving about her co-loony, Grace Tart....

They charged that proto-teamster, Hell's Angels Mama in lappets, Susquehanah Mooday, to tour the bin....

They should have committed her....

Bag lady....

25 cent woman....

A choir of mental weaklings praised P/Bigge's glittering intellect. They loved her shit, after they'd rolled in it a thousand times.

Entrapping, that's what she was....

Johnny supposed so. After you read her crap, it was like it got in your hair. It was like getting sprayed by a skunk. You couldn't get the stink off.

A novel about loonies, really about fucking shrinks. P/Bigge always knew where it was at, which side had the fish-fat....

Stole it from Johnny! His whole shtick!

Entrapment opposed to freedom and responsibility, some other moron suggested. Favorite philosophical question: free will, the human genome project, my DNA made me beat the bitch's brains out with a double-bitter, etc., etc....

Then they read some alleged satire from Gracie's point of view. Compared the stud whose bitch she offed to a fly in a spider-web. How fucking original....

Grace Tart....

Total fucking bore....

How the shrink was overwhelmed by Gracie, the poor psycho-slob....

His realization, that the mind was deeper than he could ever fathom (yawn)....

His lofty intellectual pursuits, belied by tawdry affair with housekeeper (*zzz*)....

Dadanian shithead critics....

Dadlitshits....

Titz Shitz....

Specialists in polarity and ambiguity....

Trixie, and Butch....

Hard to tell where Gracie's unfulfillment ended, and P/Bigge's began....

Impossible to care....

Thing Street Asylum

When everything might have come clear and spoiled the ambiguity, P/Bigge staged another Rube Goldberg epiphany, followed immediately by a POWER BLACKOUT....

Favorite literary device of Dadlitshit....

Wacousta on the forest floor with sex-crazed captives. Where Johnny was conceived....

The long flashback into the phthisic heart of nothing.

The worsening spiral of twisted theories and evil practices, culminating in the classroom.

Vix College....

Kinky voyeuristic poetics. Elaborately staged for the prurient provincial peep-show. Skin for the Zoncolite Girl. The blinding flash of a Rube Goldberg epiphany when everyone blacks out....

Norrie Freed....

P/Bigge Shitte Allwood....

The National Literature....

Crap....

All that, in P/Bigge Shitte's flat, boring monotone....

Murmuring in the dark, where all the cows are black....

Come'n get! Hot FOOD!

STICK it in! CRAM it!

FUCK me!

*****

We were all virtually prisoners, even the reader was a prisoner, ESPECIALLY the READER....

The imagination could not SOAR....

True, bitch.....

After a little while you realized you were being exploited by some hag with nothing to say....

Some kinda loony....

In lappets....

Brought to you by Zoncolite....

POEMFORTHEDAY!

*****

A white plastic bag with a toy helicopter inside that Jack Was Every Inch a (One-Eyed) Sailor wanted for a child he knew, hanging on an upside down (barrel-shaped) table-leg.

A useless, rusted toy....

He wanted it, for himself.

Hanging from hooks that Johnny had inserted in the wall, a coffee pot, a thermos, a carafe, an ash-tray, a road lantern, a Tiffany-style lamp-shade.

Behind the chairs on the dysfunctional radio-cabinet, a 1930s china cabinet with a fancy curved top-piece. Romeo called it depression furniture.

Johnny found it depressing.

*****

50s Chic came by to get some boxes. She'd finally found a pad on Rancidvale.

Romeo asked her where Butch was.

At a movie!
The Beast of Yucca Flats II....
Romeo asked how long she'd known him.
Two years.
Romeo said she should get rid of him.
She wanted to keep him. He was cute.
Romeo said there were plenty of cute ones. But maybe she should keep this one for another year.
Why?
Just to say they'd had had a three-year relationship.
Mitzi asked why she should bother to say that?
It was something to do. It was a record....

*****

Johnny saw 50s Chic and her delinquent Butch strolling along Thingstreet. His shit-blond hair looked wet. He was doing Jimmy Stewart.
Johnny asked them how the move was going.
Mitzi said they were almost finished. Johnny told Butch he should feel guilty, because they would have been moved by now, if he hadn't gone to a movie.
Mitzi was shocked. So was Butch. He wasn't capable of feeling guilty....
Johnny said he had the moral insanity REAL BAD....
Butch was about to answer with his fists when Mitzi leapt up and kissed him on the mouth. She assured him, he was fine.
She turned to Johnny. It was time they left....

*****

Heatwave on Thing Street. Not to mention all North America. So hot Romeo only got half loaded. There wasn't enough room, anyway. Nobody was buying in this heat. Not the heavy shit, the nine-piece walnut dining-room shit, etc.
Never again....

No, you can’t go back....

*****

Only Trixie came, nattering about her table and chairs.
The last French Provincial Zsa Zsa Nine-Piece Euro-Trash Special....
She hadn't agreed on the price yet, but it was HERS....
She asked about a chandelier and matching sconces, about a large green Empire-style settee. She knew the price; she wanted a deal....
Johnny asked her if she was asking or telling him.
You're something else. So what did he get?
Johnny said, not much; it was hot....
They must at least have unloaded the van....
Asking, or telling?
You're something else. The way you cover for each other.
A big foot-baller puked and croaked during the commercials.... A hundred degrees, in the shade.... Blackouts in California.... Bill Gates' computers crashed.... His yacht didn't sink, it ran aground, in the Potomac.... Arabs visited the Titanic, on camels.... Atlantis, in the Sub-Sahara.... The U.S.A. was boiling....
The $.25 Woman got heat stroke, and had to refund the money....
Her books weren't selling.

All Trixie could think about was the Zsa Zsa Special and....

*****

Thing Street Asylum

Jack Was Every Inch a (One-Eyed) Sailor chained his hot velocipede to a drum-table, before collapsing in an empire-style fanback. He selected one of the vintage paper-backs that Johnny had piled outside the store, and began to read himself to sleep.

A few minutes later he stumbled into the store and offered Johnny a quarter for the book. Maybe he was walking in his sleep....

Johnny said it cost three dollars.

Jack Was Every Inch a (One-Eyed) Sailor said the price on it was twenty-five cents.

That was fifty years ago. Now it was three dollars.

Jack Was Every Inch a (One-Eyed) Sailor strode to the door, threw The Well of Loneliness back onto the pile, and told Johnny it was the last thing (for sure) he'd try to buy from him....

Johnny was a crook...

Jack Was Every Inch a (One-Eyed) Sailor paused astride his gleaming hot CCM, briefly the cynosure of every strolling fence and bum on Thing Street, before riding off, into the polluted sunset....

He paid for Johnny's education....

He knew Johnny's father....

*****

Johnny thought it was time Butch FOLLOWED THE SAME RULES AS EVERYONE ELSE.

This included

1) No (ZERO!) illegal activity on the property,

2) No incessant coming and going of clients, especially for purposes of drug trafficking,

3) No bad hygiene or bad smells in his apartment, nauseating everyone else in the building,

4) No interference with tradesmen, in particular pest control technicians, who came there to maintain the property for the benefit of everyone,

5) No tampering with locks, fire-escapes, gates, and yard lights to facilitate their clients' access to the property,

6) No loitering outside the doors all night, with gangs of dealers and other crooks, etc., etc....

7) And above all, no BIKES on the BALCONY!

He was a CLIENT! He was tired of the criminal element (Butch, Bruce, Fellini, et al.) acting like Emile Durkheim's TWIN TOWER was their HENHOUSE, to the detriment of everyone else's life, liberty and pursuit of happiness, as guaranteed by the U.N., and its Charter....

This element repeatedly drove away their immediate neighbors. It was like Yugoslavia....

They even tried to toss Trixie back onto Thing Street. A refugee! They baited her, then tried to get her evicted for being crazy.

She demanded to know when Porko was going to clean up her place. He'd used her roughly last night. She threatened to call Citizen Hearse. Butch had sold sold her bad drugs. She knew he got paid by the movie people to use Emile Durkheim House in pictures. She wanted a cut for showing the place. She did all the work....

She was the Radio Artist....

Hearse-Ferrari put down the receiver and cooked the books while she harangued. Later something would jog his memory and he'd mention it to Porko. He'd got another prank call from that wack-job from $CAMH....

She said it just wasn't a party if her guests didn't trash the place, plug her sink, and turn on the water....

When Johnny attempted to curtail Fellini a few years ago, they tried to drive out Johnny too, and circulated a petition signed by every Thing Street junkie.

Baiting people was routine. Standard procedure. Likewise calling people crazy, among the criminally insane.

They did their utmost to destroy other people's sanity, while deluding themselves they deserved a decent place to live.

They called themselves Pioneers of Social Change.

They were wack-jobs.

Butch didn't need a DOCTOR! He needed a lawyer!

Butch had the evil ethos of a failed Walmart Santy who'd diddled one too many little boys. He liked to say inappropriate things about fucking Johnny in front of Romeo. Let's fuck him, he'd say. Let's fuck him together!

Then he'd do a noisome strip-tease. He wanted to show Johnny where the black basketball team jumped him for gandering them over at the Collegiate Institute. Johnny's sympathies lay with the team.

Meanwhile Butch smiled to himself as he slowly opened the bright, pink shirt to show Johnny the angry red paps with hairy aureoles....

He was gaining weight. He needed a corset....

He was playing a theremin.

Butch had a theremin in his chest.

Disgusting fat pig with boobs like the fat lady's at Bozo's Big Top....

He hated Christmas!

*****

Today there was a shootout at THE EDMO. News of the incident was suppressed, so Johnny committed it. To Thing Street Asylum.

It happened in broad daylight. Shots rang out across the hood. It sounded like Alapaloozaha's sub-machine gun, but it was only a 45.

Clients scuttled down the dark-varnished stairs of a dozen welfare hotels and flops.

It blew out the bottom half of the front door. Now there were almost as many bullet holes in Edmond Place as there were in Edmond, shot by the cops for waving a hammer at them on the Thing Street Car.

He would have been proud of the power of his name to draw fire, but sad about getting shot.

He'd stop balling Jane Jacobs long enough to show her where his building was. She'd fart and take another swig of cooking wine and say fuck! It should have been a strip-mall.

Look, he'd say pointing. There's Victor Willis - bang! bang!

They said it was rival Housing Workers - that's CRACK DEALERS - from PARC and Habitat Housing fighting over caseload - clients, they liked to say.

It was really just $CAMH. Everybody knew. Look at Trixie Zane. Did anyone seriously believe they paid her 700 thou to sell citrus shampoo to clients with a hygiene problem?

Were they really supposed to believe it was a shoot-out between rival toiletry salesmen? Between FULLER BRUSH and AMWAY?

It wasn't citrus shampoo the skank was pushing.

The more crack, the more prozac. This gang-buster business got everyone depressed so $CAMH could put them on it. After their suicide they'd be tranformed into more (posthumous) poster people like Edmond. Trixie'd say tut! tut! If only they'd listened to $CAMH, this never would have happened. However the ones who went down in a hail of cop bullets were by far the best money makers.

It was a win-win situation for $CAMH and their middle-class clients. Junkies with money. They sold more drugs and destabilized the neighborhood, drowning the working poor in Lake Hogtarry. The Mimico Solution. Then middle-class junkies moved into the neighborhood, and the property values soared. $CAMH owned half the real-estate wealth of the country.

Citizen Hearse's Handy Havens were suddenly worth billions.

The drug cartels merged with the pharmaceuticals.

AstraZeneca replaced Ford Motors.

The middle-class was more stoned than ever....

*****

Brad came by. He'd taken up landscape painting. It was the closest thing he could find, to vacuuming....

He raved about the little stump lot Louis XIV tried to copy at Versailles. How the tyrant told the architect to make the copy better than the original or die. The copy was worse, because it was over the top.

Louis loved it....

Small world, but he wouldn't want to paint it....

He couldn't help thinking about the Zsa Zsa Special....

Full of bullet-holes...

*****

The heat depressed him. It felt permanent. The only thing that was....

Thing Street Asylum

He passed the solstice. The days diminished. The light diminished. But not the heat.

Maybe the planet was dying, but the heat was killing. Most of it was dead already. From time to time, it all was. If something so monstrous could be said to have a preference, it was for dying. Killing possibly, but it was too close to call. A brutal, unfriendly prodigal.

No asylum! Not even on THING STREET....

*****

Citizen Hearse wrecked Butch's artistic career by buying newspapers like THE MAYPOLE DAILY EXAMINATION and bribing the reviewers to say Butch's work was crap. Which it was.

He would never become the ballsy-voiced radio announcer doing the Zoncolite spot on the Radio Hour....

It was hard to believe he ever thought seriously of becoming a DOCTOR....

He copied pictures from old postcards onto envelopes and napkins from Shagburger O'Shaughnessy's and presented them to his Social Workers.

He sold Post Cards on Thing Street.

He said the Louvre was Thing Street Asylum.

The locomotive at the Gare du Nord was the furnace.

The Eiffel Tower was the water closet....

Butch became delusional. He suffered delusions of grandeur. He grew insanely jealous of everyone, but especially of Porko and his job at Emile Durkheim House. In his narcosis he convinced himself. Hearse-Ferrari had initially offered him the position....

Medical Superintendent of Emile Durkheim's Twinned Tower....

Despite his Lived Experience, he turned it down....

Compassionate grounds....

Ethical considerations....

He threatened to stop doing Grand Rounds on weekends. The cure rate would plummet, so would the crime rate....

Johnny knew the Grand Rounds were just an excuse for casing out the joint. His idea of security was knocking on everybody's door to see who was home. If anyone answered, he solicited him for a donation. If nobody answered, he broke the lock. Then he thoughtfully opened all the fire-doors, for floozies desperate enough to enter and share themselves, with him and Bruce.

Jah Lo See picked the Social Workers' garbage, looking for the dregs of their delicious lattes, sticky with heat.

She had no idea what her drawings were doing there, but she recognized Butch's clumsy daub of the Paris Opera as the Emergency Department of Thing Street Asylum.

Where she'd attended many an Opening Night Gala....

*****

MAX THE BUTCHER appeared in prime time on Hearse's Fascist BELA HIRELING SHOW, the PERFECT POSTER-BOY. Smooth, mealy-mouthed QUISLING. DISLIKED the M WORD - never said HATE - just stabbed you in the back sometime you weren't looking.

What a COUP - for BELA HIRELING. Co-opted a GOOD LOONY, for his MINSTREL CLOWN-SHOW.

Pickin' dem up & PUTTIN' DEM DOWN! Fence-sitting LOONIES FUM H-O-O-ME!

Just like that. Johnny wanted to talk about the LANGUAGE of SLAVERY - the bipolar disordered totally unrepentant undeconstructed (unreconstructed?) unexamined LANGUAGE of MENTAL HELLNESS....

But HOW - without a WORD about its DIRTIEST MOUTHPIECE - $CAMH - State Capitalists Advancing Mental Hell.... and

Trixie Zane!

Without a WORD about their RESTIGMATIZING LIES: Transforming LIVES (ie., Tranforming LIVE ONES), NEW ERA for Mental Hell (ie., they just SCORED another $30,000,000.00), The NEW KIND OF Hospital (ie., The NONE OF IT'S KIND Hospital), Tranforming THE NEIGHBORHOOD (ie., NEIGHBORHOOD CLEANSING), PART of the NEIGHBORHOOD (ie., ALL of IT - CONDOS, ART-BARS, HIPSTER BARS, GALLERIES, CONDOS, CONDOS, CONDOS in PORKDALE MISSISSAUGA), Removing STIGMA (removing Johnny, Butch, Bruce, et al.), Removing STIGMA (from CONFLICT OF INTEREST, COLLUSION, and CRIME), CLIENT-CENTRED (ie., CORPORATE CLIENT-CENTRED, M'Lady

MARGARET DUMONT (PIZZAPHRENIA) McCAIN, MA IT'S JUST LIKE BEING THERE (HELL) BELL, LaBATT'S BLUE - MAKE IT A BLUE - more than a FEW etc....)....

The whole lexicon....

But only the silence of MAX THE BUTCHER, long-time MADPRIDE poster-boy and his sidekicks BUTCH....
And Bruce!
Enabling the MONOLOGUE of Hearse's FASCIST STATE TV....
A MARATHON without interruption or MEANING either....
Misleading, out-of-date, distracting and totally undeconstructed, Johnny said.
HEARSE and his CENSORIOUS HENCHMMAN, BELA HIRELING controlled the whole misleading media circus.
How useful, for the STATE CAPITALISTS of $CAMH! The government wrote a report, and there was BELA - to SPIN the report, exactly as the government wanted. Max's participation in the latest CLOWN-SHOW merely legitimized what was essentially a white-wash, a rip-off of ALL society, but especially of MAD PEOPLE - as usual, Johnny feared. Max was useful, as usual - to the WORST people! Disappointing, but not surprising. Johnny had low expectations, for academics.
Did anything good come out of Pork University, Clownsview?
BELA, MAX, STATE CAPITALISTS on HEARSE TV - it was like inviting a few GOOD DARKIES to the BALL, to dance and sing, so long as nobody mentioned SLAVERY at that BIG HOUSE down THING STREET....

Meanwhile, besides her career ambition to replace Elvira on FREAK NIGHT, Mitzi wanted to star in The Hearse's made-for-TV spectacular, Young Morgie, Baby Eater. What he did with his unborn brother, Big Sister's Little Bun. How he soliloquized him every evening in the sterilizer, which he hid under the urinal on a lovely little Duncan Phyfe table from Johnny's Thing Store, decorated with fat Cupids. He was his brother's keeper all right. Little Bun Morgenthaler, dead at minus 1 (approx.). But only in the flesh....

Mitzi kept thinking about Young Morgie. Great guy....
Butch said he'd been careful, but she was having dizzy spells and vomiting....
Getting knocked up would be a disaster.... She'd never get that spot hosting Freak Night for Citizen Hearse....

Titles like A Most Contagious Game, End of the Line, Bed of Hate. They still had that copy of Radcliffe Hall's The Well of Loneliness. A couple of women, one with purple-dyed hair, looked at it, but the one with plain blond hair dismissed it. It was a period piece. The cover showed two very unhappy-looking women with short hair. Very serious....

A Mickey Mouse watch....

Philip K. Dick....

Good-bye Uncle Tom!

*****

There were Case Histories from the Buffalo radio station and Niagara Falls. It was public radio, so of course they were sad....

The night-time lows used to be daytime highs. The lows were in the 80s, the highs in the 100s. There were storm warnings every day, but it never rained. This continued for months.
The PROMISED LAND was in drought. Half the wheat and corn were lost. Major U.S. rivers were shrunken, and tepid as bath-water. Johnny expected food prices to rise dramatically in the fall.
What did HE know? Food prices were already so artificially rigged it wouldn't make any difference if 90% of the harvest got ploughed back into the ground. Losers like Johnny only got 5% anyway, after the ethanol plants, who got theirs practically FREE. If the corn was even slightly more expensive, the ethanol plants wouldn't take it, and there'd be more for Johnny....
Meanwhile young people couldn't find work, and old people couldn't afford to retire.
If one quit, one would never find another job. Nobody could afford to retire before he was eighty. At least at 80 there wasn't time to exhaust one's savings.

*****

Thing Street Asylum

William Fox and Jesse Lassky
Both joined in the fun
Big directors
Joined with willing actors
Till the whole bunch seemed like one....

Dancing at that moving picture ball....

*****

Trixie on the M.B.C. Addressing the BIG questions. Like whether anyone achieved success before the change of life.

Now THERE was a TRANSFORMATION....

So why start now?

Discussion of her latest novella immediately disintegrated into a lot of inane gas-letting about relationships.... Bags and slags at their summer cottage.... The (too) long Chataugua....

Will Toots go on to a perfectly satisfactory marriage? Who gives a shit....

That wasn't the question for her rival gas-bag.... For her it all came down to the love of a good SLAG....

Birdies twerping in the background.... Hubbies farting.... Speech slurring as they got tanked and yanked.....

Sex outside of marriage used to be completely filthy....

Johnny thought it wasn't so hot inside it either, by the sound of things....

Now they were talking about Gal Pal's gentility....

They had their nerve, those gross cunts on permanent sex drive up north.... Gave Johnny a totally different perspective on northern purity.... Nanook was a freak....

Talking about Dr. Trixie Zane as if she was a real person.... Had no patience with her, etc. How could you lose patience with a verbal construct....

Then again.... If it was by P/Bigge Shitte Allwood....

If it was SCHIZOPHRENIA....

Bruce was stable, a tall oak....

Really?! How so?

Bruce.... Dr. Trixie Zane.... Who the fuck were these things? Johnny was clueless.

They didn't exist. Not ever....

*****

The Curse of Mental Health was $CAMH Psychiatry. With plenty of dough from Weiner King McCain $CAMH was building what Trixie called the Recovery Palace. He'd never known schizophrenia to be called that before. That was already dishonest - already a lie - because she knew it was the ward for schizophrenia. They couldn't have it both ways - label their schizophrenics and end stigma too - or exploit it with their onebravenight nonsense, then pretend it didn't exist.

But they did! There was a lot of manipulative talk about hope, with typically few reasons for it. A spanking new Centre for Brain Stimulation was nothing to hope for. The therapeutic neigborhood was a computer terminal with virtual streets. The real ones were schizomimetic.

Crummy $CAMH West was just down Thing Street in Porkdale. It and schizophrenia continued to exist, shittier than ever. The graffiti reviled Alapaloozah in the New Age for Mental Hell.

We elected a slime who cries on a dime. It's whose Daddy's son you are and his Mercedes car! Behold what our Flag got! A real flaming faggot!

*****

Johnny woke up in the morning with renewed vigor, confident of at least one thing.... There could no longer be any doubt. The planet was dying....

Heatwave in Hogtown. Fellow citz croaking in Lady West-Inn's giant cookie factory.... She delivered the annual Gruel from the Throne-Chair in a dress made out of Peak-Freaks and spewing a phony Limey accent created by cramming her trap with choc-lit-chips....

What rights did Lady West-Inn's cookie fairies have? They baked along with her Peak-Freaks at temperatures in excess of 40% centigrade. Their organ meat cooked.... Their brain cells fried like hamburger....

Union Men faked concern. They were disappeared....

Pioneers of Alienation

*****

Trixie demanded a bargain. Paying the difference between the reasonable price Johnny asked for a waterfall dresser and her insanely low offer, with what she considered her incomparable charm. Only it didn't work, on Johnny....

She wanted to grab that barrel-shaped table-leg, and screw him with it....

Instead, she picked up a wooden Pepsi box from outside. She had a stainless-steel gadget in her other hand. She asked Johnny what it was for. He didn't know; maybe French-fries. She said she thought that was a very good guess.

She asked him how much he'd charge for something like that.

Like that, but not that? Johnny wondered.

He said, maybe five dollars.

She became ecstatic; she'd just bought it, down Thing Street, for two.

Then she asked him how much he wanted for the box.

Suddenly he saw her strategy; she was a conniver, probably a thief as well. She'd say she bought his whole Thing Store, down the street. There was another one, exactly like it. Multiple personalities, multiple stores....

He said, a hundred bucks.

Romeo, Romeo....

Praetorius showed up. Her personal manager. He said, forget the box. He wanted that fan over there, gleaming, with dials, buttons, and knobs, like Eel's Positron, or a Theremin....

Really cool, after their nightly contortions....

It was on top of a display case full of shit. It was beautiful. It had twin fans like airplane turbines, with stainless steel blades in a silver-gray frame, like a Samsonite suitcase.

It had very generously spaced bars, on the grill, ideal for dicing children's fingers, and flinging them all over the living-room.

It was G.E. Edison's Company!

Gimme, said Praetorius. He was perched on a metal folding-chair. He'd rolled up his trousers, for that Tom Sawyer in Panama look.

No, said Johnny. He wanted it for the store, which was fast becoming known as the Thing Street Hell-Kitchen....

How much, demanded Praetorius.

That one's not for sale, Johnny said.

Everything's for sale, said Praetorius.

Wrong, Johnny said without conviction.

There were unsubstantiated rumors that all Thing Street, the Asylum, Ground Zero, Yucca Flats, Oakridge, the Emile Durkheim Houses and Handy Havens, all the psychomes, doss-houses, and flops, even Johnny's book, were not only on the market, but were never off it, had changed hands half a dozen times in just the last year, but always the same hands, that played poker with Citizen Hearse and Chuck Handy, in the back room at the Sands.

With Anna Q. Nielsen, H.B. Warner, Buster Keaton....

A game of solitaire among multiple personalities of the same syndic.

*****

Trixie refused to acknowledge Johnny's presence....

Standing there with her arms crossed, making a delicate little moue like a cat's ass....

She came with Praetorius (again). To show she had a FRIEND. She met all her friends in THING stores. She met Praetorius in a bargain BASEMENT.

Remember my LITTLE FRIEND?

What's up, Doc?

Praetorius cringed and snarled like a wild animal. He circled around him. To get at his fanbacks and worship them....

He'd had enough of Johnny's harassment....

*****

Johnny exerted himself to show her things, which she totally ignored except to whine that she couldn't see them, or that what she saw made her want to go BLIND, the scratches made her ITCHY, etc....

Trixie kept nattering about SOLID wood. Johnny wanted to tell her that the only SOLID WOOD was her brain, and Praetorius's, which was FRUIT wood....

Trixie and LITTLE FRIEND scampered off seeking TALLBOYS at LOW PRICES....

She drooled over the mouth-watering THINGS. Foam-flecks filled the dimples of her ever-wagging jaws....

She was having an EPISODE....

*****

Now Trixie and Praetorius wanted to turn the Coffeeslimes into Walk-In Clinic Espresso Bars. Full of old Movie Queens from the MBC and the Sharke Institute....

She wouldn't buy from Johnny any more, only Johnny's boss. After all, he could afford to be the boss, it was his Thing Store.

She wanted an ugly old buffet with half the veneer flaking off. To convert it into a china cabinet for her Rathskeller Clinic....

Romeo said they'd flip a coin for it. If it came up tails she had to pay him a hundred bucks for the dresser. Heads it was free. It came up heads. She was ecstatic. She embraced him.

She offered to decorate Romeo's French Grill. As soon as he decided to have one. She'd do it in Thing Street colors.

Johnny imagined psychotropic orange and black.

Halloween every day....

The customers wearing the lurid rags he sold them. Blending right in....

The waiters in skimpy sailor-suits. On the tables bowls of free condoms, for the kids. For the parents, crack.

*****

God rain....

Sharpshanks took it for a sign. Things were looking up, or would be soon....

He was, right now....

Not to mention, those shares he had in Whoresell. They'd must be worth something! So he lived it up. At the Coffee Slime. At Piece-A-Piece-A. The sky was the limit. Unfortunately, it was low on the horizon. No sense over-doing things....

Then he was broke again. Even Johnny Boy's big rebate, used up. He'd been so expansive. Told Johnny, take ten percent. At least! While the god rain fell. Hours ago. Only, it seemed years....

Chinga, Jose said in the window, helplessly watching his favorite black ironstone coffee mug plummet into the upturned face of the otherwise prostrate bum three stories below, on pigeon-shat Thing Street....

Sharpshanks clutched his head, muttered an imprecation.

A plea to J. Zeus Murphy for a bigger hard-drive? One that wouldn't crash? Or was it a prayer to God to forgive him for his ingratitude, his unbelief?

Because, now, he believed in God, too.

Chinga, Jose repeated. Life was one big accident.

Carelessness!

He'd repaired the air-conditioner only that morning, to stop the condensation. Now the sidewalk was wet again. With coffee.

God rain.

*****

Babyface Marjoram's new bath-tub was full of empties and cigarette butts, but he refused to clean it out. He told his worker that it was their job. He got very worked up about it in the store. Even if he felt like doing it, the cleaning was unionized and he wasn't going to cross the line.

The beer bottles and cigarette butts could just stay there. Till doomsday! He stabbed the air with his index finger. He was indignant.

Now Babyface Marjoram tried to lay away old camping equipment. Johnny easily imagined why. Being homeless was camping without the fun. All by yourself unless you were getting rolled, and with a good chance of dying. He wanted Johnny to lay away a portable barbecue in a dirty white canvas bag, an aluminum hand-warmer like a giant Zippo....

Unfortunately, Babyface Marjoram's latest lay-aways had all been vetoed by Trixie, who was on to him. He told Johnny it was a temporary bureaucratic fuck-up. The bastards!

Johnny was on to him, too. All that furniture he laid away, asking for a letter to show Trixie, promising to return with the money. They'd issue the cheque, and he'd cash it and blow it on computer things from J. Zeus Murphy's Zombie Crypt down Thing Street.

Then Trixie paid him a house-call, only this time she couldn't use the shower, or sit down. But she'd issued him a cheque for a sofa, a bed with a (lovely French Provincial headboard), a dining set, a couple of dressers, knickknacks, etc.

Sure had a lot of computers though!

I go for the gusto, he said. Uncertainly....

*****

Babyface staggered to a roadside pay-phone, inserted his last quarter, and slowly dialed Johnny's number with painfully frost-bitten fingers.

You know that crummy history you wrote about me?

Yeah, he seemed to recollect. What about it?

Sorry to do this to you, JOHNNY!

Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre said it wasn't THE REAL ME.

Yeah? What's that, anyway? Like he gave a fuck.

It's YOU! All YOU!

Well, maybe we better conclude, then....

So it's MINE? I can HAVE IT?

You just said it was ME!

*****

Off the shoulder of the Highway to Hammtown. In a gravely ravine beside his frozen corpse, a final blue flicker from Babyface Marjoram's aluminum hand-warmer....

A snow-plow crushed him.

He'd had it....

His TRANSFORMATION....

*****

Johnny met thingaholics making their endless rounds. J. Zeus Murphy's Zombie Crypt, the Nofrillies, the Damnation Army, even Johnny's Thing Store....

He met Jose Ferreira. He'd been loitering at Thing and Dung when somebody behind him surprised him, demanding in a rough bum's voice what he was doing. He slowly turned around giving himself time to formulate an elegant retort like fuck yourself, cock sucker, but it was only Jose Ferreira. In a baseball cap.

It took Johnny a few seconds to remember. O, yeah! He was on his way to the post office in the Psych-O-Farm-A-C, to mail copies of his book to editors in the U.S.A., to ream their ass-holes with. Johnny was solicitous of editorial holes; he sent them bum-fodder.

Jose Ferreira said he was on his way to the NoFrillies, to buy milk. Johnny offered to walk him to the next corner. They took in the scenery. Everywhere Johnny looked, junkies and loonies. He recognized them. He wasn't one of them. He was both....

*****

Degenerate punks in gangster suits tormented a fat drag queen. She followed them. She begged. She pleaded. She offered them free ciggies to see their cocks. Just once! A carton....

Smokes for strokes for blokes for jokes....

She was especially interested in a big strapping stock-boy from the Nofrillies. He had a handsome mug, a fresh crew-cut, and he knew it....

Shoppers squeezed through the turnstile with yellow Nofrillies bags they paid five cents for because there were no frills at the Nofrillies. The bags bulged with cans of tomato soup and tomato juice and hamburg in styrofoam trays wrapped in plastic.

An old woman in sun-glasses and a dirty track-suit blocked their path. She asked them for a quarter.

Nobody gave her one.

Thing Street Asylum

*****

Johnny was nattering about the next recession, before he was out of this one. He could buy a computer with a word-processing program already installed for five dollars at the Cripp's. Even J. Zeus Murphy's Zombie Crypt Store couldn't beat that. If you knew the right things they'd give you the computer and five dollars to take it away.

Johnny said he was getting worried. Apart from the next recession his money was running out.

Not a cute student anymore. Old, and broke!

Johnny's friend said he should consider teaching.

A lesson one afternoon....

Johnny started to laugh so hard, he came. He and The Leash, Dr. Ulysses S. Dogleish, Emeritus Registrar of Cartoon U, benefactor of madkind, etc., weren't so different....

In that night where all the methane smells the same. Like stale old farts, that is....

The Leash, staggering down Thing Street. Writing biographies in his stunning Great Pedagogues and Bursars series. A bum approaches, enquiring about his latest book. The Leash staggers. He raises a palsied claw in the general direction of thought's last known address....

B-b-book?! W-w-what b-b-book?!

It would be like that, for Johnny. He wouldn't recognize the loser asking him about some shit he wrote last night but couldn't remember. Last night was aeons ago in the life of a senile dement. The Precambrian Era was last night....

Carelessness....

A disaster for the aerospace program....

*****

A 48 year old married Baptist businessman, and Workman's neighbour on Mutual Street, W.T. was admitted on January 20, 1883 for depression attributed on his History to business unsuccess. Listed among his delusions and propensities were refusing food and thinking that nothing could prosper with him.

Dr. Collins's Certificate reported the statement of W.T.'s wife that all his trouble has been want of success in business life & he wouldn't make any further effort.

Workman's diagnosis remarked W.T.'s deep melancholy.

*****

Morning at Porko's Thing Street pad....

As usual the budgies were scratching and scraping in the shit on the floor of their cage under a filthy Da-Minion flag. Porko removed the cover and opened the curtains that his honey VIXEN FOXY WEASEL-THEATRE made out of his smelly old G.A.S.P. boxers the last time she was in the Sharke Institute....

*****

Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre was busted for hiding out in the coal bin with a 40-ouncer while Alapaloozah took the kids out for a joy-ride (he said) into a pylon on the 401.....

His idea of The Better Way (To Hell).....

While she was in the Sharke Tank she stayed in the ward for Feeble-Minded Whores and Race Suicides where she met the beautiful Trixie....

She'd only lately discovered the joys of Lesbia (she said).... She'd been reading that glorious Nestor of Dadanian alienists, Dr. C(old) K(iller) Sharke, on his favorite subjects....

His articles were synergizing with Wally's sugarstick and concurrently pussy-bumping a local gang of diesel dykes....

Transforming fascism into a spanking new gynocentric theology....

The Ratchet Madonna!

*****

Pioneers of Alienation

The Killuh was right....

Those bitches selling race suicide in the form of three-generations-later hereditary taint to every teamster on Thing Street....

They really were feeble-minded, moral, idiots....

Fuck a man?

Ah, ha ha ha! What Thing Street needed was gangs of Lesbian bikers terrorizing the men and fucking their whores....

No more brats going deaf, dumb, and blind when least expected....

No more Thing Street Asylums teeming with endlessly rocking schizoid spawn.....

Trixie invited VIXEN FOXY WEASEL-THEATRE to join her organization....

She accepted the invitation....

To Emile Durkheim House....

Trixie's pad was at the back on the third floor....

Trixie offered her a JOB....

In the COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT....

From her parlor window you could see the Hardener Distressway....

But not many whores....

That traffic was too brisk for their business....

Still, Johnny liked to sit on her sofa....

Lake Hogtarry illuminating the smog-choked sky with an all-night radioactive sunset....

You couldn't see it for the pollution, the congestion, the car-lights whizzing by....

But you knew it was there....

It stank, too....

Like turnips, piss and some kind of mutation-fish that really STANK when it died....

Coelacanths....

Made it real COZY....

Especially with all the old things from Romeo's store that she strewed around....

An old yellow pine dresser with the back off and brass lion's-head handles....

Her commode....

A bowl-and-pitcher set (fake)....

A super-ornate gilded frame that must once have held a picture of Queen Victoria, but now held the mirror that Trixie tarted up in.... Almost made him wish he was straight....

Beyond the lake, PARADISE....

LAND OF THE FREE....

HOME OF THE BRAVE....

*****

Johnny recognized the Englishman's dog wrapping its leash around a shelf full of vinyl records....

The little girl's balloon fried on the power line in M....

If it pulled it over it would be crushed to death. Poor thing. At least it wouldn't be scratching and rubbing its ass all over the linoleum.

The guy was testing a Motorola cell-phone. Something Mayor Smell Gasman threw out. That time the battery failed just when the phone sex was beginning to move his dick however insensibly....

He couldn't shoot the messenger, so he threw the medium out the window.

He hadn't been so annoyed since his starry-eyed wife Marilyn got busted for stealing a pair of nylons, from Cecil Eatone.

*****

Trixie left a note for him on the radiator in his Thing Street psychome. Beginning, Dearest Johnny Boy....

> Just got a new job. Had to tell you. With The Sharke. At his spanking new Mental Hell CASINO, etc.
>
> But the best part is when I strap the electrodes to his clients' tender temples for twelve shots of juice. But it isn't till number eleven that they suddenly get better. The Sharke's lightning fin parts the darkness. It's spring! Birds sing, everything is beautiful....

Everybody cries for it. Screams for The Sharke's good thing. It sounded so good, I started the treatment myself. I can't wait for number eleven. I had some last night but I forget how many. At least, I think it was last night. I think I'll have a few more just for good measure.

I'm feeling better. I must be. I'm getting close to eleven. Hey, who am I writing this thing to anyway? Oh, yeah....

I'm CEO and you're not!

It's a NEW ERA for Mental Hell!

Eat your HEART out! Eat SHIT!!!

P.S.: The Sharke's teeth really are pearly white. Just like in the song. His nose hairs tickle.... (Very TRANSFORMING....)

*****

The newspapers dismissed Elliott.

They also inadvertently exposed the system, by connecting Elliott's battle and ultimate defeat to processes in the country at large. The target of Elliott's detractions, Mortimer Clark, was becoming the future Sir Mortimer, Lieutenant-Governor of Hogtario.

It is hard to believe that the principal targets of Elliott's attacks, always relegated to the back-pages of the issue, really are the same swine whose faces appear on the front page, under glowing eulogies. The legal representative of the Home for Incurables would soon be the representative of the Crown, and its First Lady Directress the First Lady of the entire province. By analogy, the Home which men allow Mrs. Clark to mismanage becomes Ontario; in both cases the guilty man is Mortimer Clark.

Other parallels become apparent, between Elliott's struggle and the struggle for life of the incumbent Lieutenant-Governor, between Elliott's final expulsion from the Home, and the new Lieutenant-Governor's installation at Government House, both reported in the same issue, though in different sections, of course.

One begins to appreciate what Elliott was up against, when he first undertook to expose the alleged troubles at the Home. With the benefit of such knowledge his chances appear to wane and expire in tandem with the life of the incumbent, Sir Oliver Mowat. With Sir Oliver's death and Mortimer Clark's succession, Elliott's defeat seems guaranteed. Though he persists on other fronts, power prevails against him there too.

A letter to Sir Mortimer Clark from the Governor General's Secretary reports his having received three letters from Colonel Elliott, on the subject of the management of the Home for Incurables at Hogtown. The Governor General is more concerned about the accompanying report of the Grand Jury to Mr. Justice Street, which indicates that there may be some ground for his complaint. But instead of investigating further or recommending that something be done to redress the conditions at the Home, the Governor General merely requests a report upon which he can base a complete reply to Colonel Elliott. The Secretary encloses Elliott's original letters, which he politely asks Clark to return. Clark scrawls in broad pencil across the top of the letter: Please return enclosures & reply that I will endeavor shortly to send report of another Grand Jury approving of Home.

When one report proves unfavorable, write another....

*****

Federico Fellini and Walter Huston lounged under the tree outside the door. Natasha slouched on the steps, unwitting of the heritage attributes of the portico above, splendid example of Al Capone Classicism that it was....

Old folks, Johnny thought. At home. No older than himself....

Fellini had a 60s-style Beatles hair-cut. He wore Bermudas and sandals in the heat. His shirt was open, but he kept it on.

Porko'd warned Fellini about going topless. He scared the female guests.

Walter Huston was a fund-raiser for northern gold mines, oil wells. He raised capital on Porko's phone. Porko got calls from capitalists as well as prospective tenants. Walter Huston dressed like Federico Fellini, except he wore a sun-hat and loud Hawaian shirt and liked to sing AS TIME GIES BY...!

He was working with this cool black guy named Omar, who'd stolen the identity of this stupid honk, so whenever the police came after him....

Porko'd told Johnny not to talk to the old lady unless she spoke first. She remembered everything.

She had a great deal of difficulty getting upstairs to her room on the second floor. Fellini joked that they wanted to get her a wheelchair and the keys to the gate so he could wheel her into the posterior airing court. He said he'd pull some strings and get her into the Bald Eagle down the street.

She didn't appreciate his jokes. She was already in an institution.

Staff at the Bald Eagle Nursing Home regularly called the police on Federico Fellini, for creating disturbances over his friends' treatment in the Home.

When it suited them, when a resident needed a bath or they wanted him to cut someone's hair, he could stay.

*****

At the Incurables Home...

Now Institute....

But everybody knew....

Everybody was fucked....

But not everybody had been diagnosed yet.... The officially fucked were better off.... They got their benefits....

Wandering around the site.... Gazing at the well-appointed Intergenerational Wellness Centre.... The beauty salon.... The tailor's shop....

All FREE....

Not like the bad old days.... When (Lady, no less!) Mortimer Clark strolled the grounds in a black silk dress and maintained order by throwing an eviction notice at anybody who complained....

Her husband was Lieutenant Governor.... A sharp lawyer....

The only place after THE HOME was an unmarked pauper's grave.... Being homeless meant being dead immediately....

Now it's dead....

Eventually....

Johnny heard the silk rustling as she crossed the lawn.... Swishhh....

She paused at the new automatic door of the high-tech building.... No more veranda with pealing columns like Dracula's Gazebo....

She didn't alert the infrared sensors....

She continued.... She'd be there all night.... In pearl-grey gloves distributing eviction notices to posterity....

Johnny didn't want to keep her waiting....

He asked the receptionist for the volunteer coordinator....

The old nun said that was her.... Just passing down the hall....

He thought he saw something....

Swishhh....

It was full of ghosts....

It was the living he couldn't see....

He knew what that meant....

He found her in the little cell around the corner.... With the shingle outside....

VOLUNTEER CENTRE....

He asked her if that was her name on the wall outside....

She said, Yes....

He offered his congratulations.... He didn't know she'd been knighted....

She nodded. How could she help him?

He just wanted to leave his application....

Fine, she said....

Maybe you'd like to take a look at this first, he said....

Handing her the manila envelope containing Thing Street Asylum, with an essay he'd written about Colonel Elliott at THE HOME in 1900.... Opposing Lady Clark....

Without even glancing at the cover, she handed it to a civil servant who emerged from the shadows in evening dress....

He'd been counting cigarettes....

At a roll-top desk....

He was Citizen Hearse....

He wore golden pince-nez....

She leaned back in her chair in front of the monitor.... Suddenly he noticed, it resembled a throne....

Sorry to do this to you, JOHNNY!

I-I-I AM J-Johnny, he st-stammered....

Thing Street Asylum

*****

50s Chic wandered from Thing Street crack-house to Thing Street crack-house. Butch followed with his videocam.

She was looking for accommodation for her funky 50s self, her delinquent cat Slim, and her World's Largest Privately-Owned Collection of Materials on Juvenile Delinquency and Porn. Johnny warned her that on Thing Street the first thing they'd want to know was if she was a Welfare Cheat, the second if she was on crack. Slum Landlords and other Oppressors weren't supposed to discriminate, but 50s Chic lived in the Enlightenment of Alapaloozah.

50s Chic had a job and wasn't (always) on crack, but she was a FREAK, so the cock-suckers slammed the door SMACK in her face as soon as she appeared on the typical dilapidated banister-missing Thing Street porch in her bright red-dyed hair-do with the prominent central bang, a tiny purse clutched in one hand, a fan in the other, clad in a loose blouse and tight slacks that made her thighs look like ice-cream cones....

She appeared on the veranda of Johnny's Chinese friend's landlord, the perfidious Citizen Hearse....

The scumbag thought she was another of his girls. He had so many, he couldn't keep track.

Citizen Hearse's girls waited on every corner of fair Thing Street's deceptively respectable-looking tree-lined streets. Behind them in squalid naked-bulb-illuminated cells in deceptively stately piles teemed even worse crack-heads than themselves. The constantly scurrying rats, roaches, and raccoons made sleep impossible and forced them onto the deceptively stately lawns where they drank, brawled, and shat all night right out in the open. Against such a background Citizen Hearse's girls moved like the classically beautiful figures on the frieze of a Grecian Urn....

This time the door swung open to the unspoken sesame of Thing Street's megapimp. In reality he had installed jeweled ball-bearing movements in the hinges and a self-lubricating track in the porch on which the door moved all night with the regularity of a pendulum and the mortality of a scythe....

Come in beautiful, said the whoremaster-general of Hogtown's Little Purgatory. How much money do you have for me tonight?

Excuse me, Sir? 50s Chic was astonished; he sounded exactly like the boyfriend, who was moving to Timbuktu. Was he equally inconvenient? She would no sooner establish herself in her new surroundings, than he'd move out and sell the place to a White Slaver. She pondered....

Citizen Hearse leered at her. No, she wasn't from one of his stables. He'd install her....

A colloquial greeting from the deep south, he said unctuously. It means how may I serve thee, my lady....

The degenerates stopped brawling and crapping on the front lawn long enough to hear....

I am looking for a decent place to live....

For you and your LITTLE FAMILY?....

Yes, for Slim and myself....

Oh, you mean you're married.... Sssss, he hissed to himself. He loathed marriage.

Slim is my cat....

Oh, a PUSSY.... He said, brightening....

He's like a child to me, or more precisely a JUVENILE DELINQUENT....

Does Slim SCRATCH?

If you TEASE him....

I'm a BIG TEASE....

Excuse me?

Oh, of course. Come on in. I have a great room right in the middle on the ground floor....

Thank you....

She entered and beheld a long corridor along both walls of which the wretched tenants had scrawled endearments (eat shit, suck cock muthafucka, etc.) in human feces.

Outside the front bedroom a Chinese woman was reading a thick wad of other things' letters and wiping her ass with them while crapping in a shallow aluminum saucepan.

Forget it, said 50s Chic. Behind her the incredible Citizen Hearse had whipped out his swarthy tool and was frantically jerking it off....

Bob's your UNCLE, his hissed....

She ran out screaming, hoping it was all just a dream. She would soon wake up back in that now-so-beautiful-seeming all-white suburb in Tennessee....

Then she slipped and tripped in something warm and mushy. The last thing she remembered was a lot of hands reaching for her from the shadows....

Johnny heard all about it the next day from Jah Lo See. How Citizen Hearse TRANSFORMED her into a.... Zoncolite Girl!

Butch got it all on tape. The performance of a lifetime.

*****

Pioneers of Alienation

She sat on the vinyl-upholstered couch in Citizen Hearse's private aerie. His bower of bliss....

She wore dark glasses, and face paint that made her normally sanguine complexion look white and metallic. Her large body was wrapped in diaphanous cloth. She smoked and talked all night, alone except when he brought her the little pill in the plastic box.

He brought it to her, with the wonderful style he'd acquired in the spas and watering-holes of Europe, the pill in its plastic casket in his left hand, the water in a little paper cup in his right.

He carefully tapped it into her palm, that opened to receive it unconsciously and naturally as a flower.

Sometimes for variety he took two pills and placed them each in a paper cup. Then he would carry the two cups in one hand, the plastic water pitcher in the other, and do two doses in one trip.

It was just sufficient to burn her synapses like hydro-electricity, without burning them out.

She was a good person. She'd wanted to believe that he was good too, but she was wrong. The voices were right. He'd hurt her too much, but no one ever saw her look better. No one ever would. It was for Svengali....

He was with a client....

*****

He saw Butch tip-toeing down Thing Street, on his way to the Godwill. He was holding someone's pinky.

It wasn't Mitzi's....

Johnny noticed. He had bad, buck teeth. A shock of blond hair, turned to ash. He nonetheless carefully combed it every morning, till it looked permed.

Seeing Johnny, he whispered something smutty in the hag's ear. If it hadn't been for Johnny, they'd have had nothing to say. He made them a lovely, happy couple. With something to say....

He said, it's Johnny, the disgusting faggot that's stalking my rock-solid ass. Shameful, what they let range Thing Street these days. Call it Hogtown, for a reason....

At the Godwill, there was no one. Even Glasses was away....

The best places were few, and very crummy. Even these were run by outfits for which you had to be a certified ARTISTE, according to Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre and the Dadanian Artist Code she copy-edited for Citizen Hearse, Charles Waldorf Handy, and the rest of that CARTEL....

Then you had to sign something, swearing that you didn't mind living with degenerates like them. You wanted to....

Suddenly, Johnny realized. Butch wasn't going to Timbuktu. Butch was an ARTISTE, under the CODE. The National Socialists had one, just like it!

Those installations he naively imagined Butch did for sheer joy of it, were entirely so he could say he'd presented his work to the PUBLIC. What work? What public? Inflatable rubber whales painted with GREENPEACE slogans, for tired matrons sitting their spawn at a wading pool in a Porkdale Parkette....

He decorated ghost bikes with swastikas, and threw them through the windows of the CAA...

C. Lamprini Eel was his agent, his representative, his DEALER....

He spent his life costive servicing THE MUSE, not farting untill he got funding....

He had receipts for all the money he spent on film shoots, flyers and brochures....

He attended the seminars advertised on late-night TV, guaranteed to get you THE PART....

He'd lived in a California-style bungalo on a concession by the river, near the Maypole City Golf & Country Club.

Now he was a POSTER-BOY....

He was getting a MODEL SUITE!

Trixie, Mitzi, Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre and a tribunal of Thing Street tarts, and at least one peer, had certified him....

A STAR....

*****

Stuff it in! Cram it in!

Thing Street Asylum

*****

Johnny thought they were hitmen: two over-dressed middle-aged thugs wearing (not golden pince-nez but) dollar-store sun-glasses....

They were....

Plain-clothes detectives with the Greater Hogtown Area Tactical Anti-Terror Squad. A tall white one and a short black one. They played good cop, bad cop. The tall white one asked the questions.

Where's Porko?

When Johnny wouldn't answer the tall white one the short black one got aggressive. Johnny looked under thirty, he wore a black leather jacket, and he was white....

The short black guy hated him immediately.... He wanted to interrogate him, work him over, beat the fuckin' shit outa the honky faggot the way big black bucks did it in American movies....

He elbowed his way into the store with the tall white goon behind him. Why won't you answer? he demanded. What do you know about Porko?

Johnny said he didn't have to tell him anything; he told him to get out of the store. Only then did the duo flash their badges.... Johnny couldn't see their names.... They wouldn't let Johnny move.... Not even with the heavy Louis XIV fanback he was carrying.... Doc Praetorius's bargain.... They had him cornered....

Now the black guy was demanding to see his vendor's permit.... So far as he knew, Romeo didn't have one.... This was looking bad.... He told them if they'd just let him pass he'd go get his boss.... Maybe he would talk to them....

The black idiot barked that it didn't work that way.... He was gonna take him in..... He probably meant O.U.T.... He was gonna work him over.... He wanted to give him the old Cherry Beach treatment for faggots and other uncooperative white boys....

Finally the white cop relented.... The clouds parted.... Or was it the Red Sea? Let that faggot go, the white cop said....

Romeo said the right things.... Nothing.... It was Warfarin Boy.... He'd run away to the CIRCUS.... To see that mother-fucking BOZO.... At least that's what he told the coppers after they caught him.... Joy-riding a hot supercycle down Thing Street.... At 2 A.M....

Warfarin Boy was jail bait....

*****

Porko lied about every fucking thing. Lied about taking the long way around the Thing Street thing store to avoid being seen by Johnny. Lied about hanging out at the laundromat with Romeo's Carlotta. Lied about arranging for his little rendezvous at Alpo-San's DOG HOUSE....

Johnny always stood in the doorway watching for him. Such a fucking sap. Porko knew it. He was plenty worth waiting for. He had THE LOOK.... Not that he intended to give Johnny more than a PEAK at his LOVELINESS....

He was really dolled up this time as he skulked around the corner dressed to kill. With a fetching psychopathic grin....

VIXEN FOXY WEASEL-THEATRE didn't fondly call him CHICK'N DUMPLIN' for nothing. With that pretty smirking face of his... Perky feminine nipples.... Hairy pits like bird-nests under the G.A.S.P. sleeves.... He was natural queer-bait.... With all the accessories.... Under an ever so slightly snug salmon-colored G.A.S.P. sports-shirt that perfectly accentuated his embonpoint....

The maroon corduroy sports-coat irritated his sensitive female paps.... He wanted to reach in and milk them to ease the pressure but he couldn't because he carried a heavy paratrooper's bag in one hand and a lit Marlborough in the other.... Winston's tasted really good like a smack smack ciggy should but the cute guys in the commercial smoked Marlboroughs when their tits got sore....

They should have castrated you at birth you piece of shit.... That brought him back to reality....

Johnny waved his hand....

Whadya mean by THAT.... Porko imitated Johnny's insouciant gesture....

By WHAT?!.... It was a typical Thing Street Dialogue of Fucks.... O, the stychomythia.... The crisp retort of coruscating fart counter-fart.... Like the greatest line in Johnny Dee's FUCKED FOR FUCK.... Their haughty bearing / showed that they were Q.U.E.E.N.S....

THIS.... Porko exaggerated Johnny's come-hither yuh-fucker finger-wave....

It means COME HERE (yuh fuck!)....

Not when I'm carrying 40 pounds of LAUNDRY....

After all those snacks I brought over to your pad only last week.... The chips.... The coka-colas.....

Come here to talk to me....

You come into my Thing Store and spoil my sales and ruin my business any time you feel like it....

I never spoiled your sales....

Pioneers of Alienation

Liar.... Yesterday some guy was looking at a mahogany rocking chair.... He asked how much it cost to get reupholstered and you said NINE THOUSAND DOLLARS.... So he didn't BUY it.... But it only cost A HUNDRED BUCKS!!! .... You wanted it for Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre Girl... Who doesn't even have any DOUGH....

No.... Mommie DEAREST gets one little Louis Quinze chair reupholstered every spring.... She pays NINE GRAND and she DOESN'T CARE....

She thinks anything with her scent on it has to be expensive....

Don't talk like that about Mommie....

Now when I'm out of a job you get all dressed up and treat me like shit.... You even took the long way around Thing Street in case I was in the thing store so I wouldn't see you....

No, I always go this way.... Thing Street is so noisy.... So DUSTY....

Come here....

Porko shuffled slowly along on his beautiful big (eleven-and-a-half wide) feet.... Humming Cake Walking Babies from Ho-ome.... He-ah dey cum.... Pik'n dem up'n put'n dem dowm....

I prefer to cross at the light, he said.... The priss....

Johnny wanted to see him get run over.... hot D.U.S.T.Y. tire-tracks all over his (beautiful) maroon-covered blood'n guts-stained corpse.... Porko.... Deader than Di in her Mercedes....

His stinking G.A.S.P. clothes scattered all up and down Thing Street.... Psych-Survivors and other schizoid fucks reaching for them thinking they were at Thing Street Asylum's Annual Community Outreach Charity Bake-Sale Free-Store AND Walk-In Clinic....

The CLOTHESLINE....

All their donations were road-kill....

*****

Suspended in mutual awed disgustingness....

Hearse-Ferrari's new TRANSFORMATIVE TITS!

He told his girls. Call me UNCLE....

They cost a fortune. Tits to keep an emperor awake, to paraphrase that Irish jerk-off. No, not Beckett or Swift, or Wilde, or....

You know! The OTHER one....

His nieces wanted to be escorts, all of them....

Their tits were too small so they went to Uncle, to set them up....

Nobody blew the whistle on their plans, told them there was no future in escorts with plastic tits, however large....

No such luck....

Hearse-Ferrari was for BOOBS.... BIG ONES....

They called him DEVELOPPER for something....

Equipped with IMPERIAL SIZE TITS, his nieces worked....

Briefly....

Overdid it....

Turned blue....

Died....

But you should have seen those tits, Hearse-Ferrari bragged.

Impressive....

BOOB'S YOUR UNCLE!

*****

Naturallly Warfarin Boy lied about where he ran away.... He didn't go to BOZO's BALD-TOP ASYLUM CLOWN-SHOW CIRCUS after all....

He went to the NATIONAL TAVERN....

The SNAKE PIT....

Warfarin Boy leaned his Huffy 10-speed against the fire hydrant that had been peed on by worse than dogs.... The old salt bouncer with one eye and a big dent in his head where part of his brain used to be spat on the sidewalk.... Warfarin Boy scowled at him under his little red bicycle helmet.... It matched his little red rain-boots....

Is my dad in there? Warfarin Boy asked, sullenly.....

If he is you don't wanna see'm.... Sonny....

I wanna see my dad....

You can't go in there.... Sonny....

Thing Street Asylum

Daddy.... Daddy.... Daddy.... He started to wail and scream terrorizing the old sailor.... This graduate of the Al Banks School of Hard Knocks could not withstand this 10 year old and his tight little ass.... One smack and he was busted for life.....

Warfarin Boy ran past the bouncer.... His tiny hard little eyes immediately adjusted to the smoky gloom.... He loved the atmosphere.... It was like a video game....

He was getting all the old farts E-mail accounts and setting them up with hookers at porn-sites all over the world.... They couldn't write.... Baby took dictation....

*****

Warfarin Boy gazed in amorous wonder at the tits dicks clits cunts and ass-holes flashing across his screen.... This wasn't Microsoft Encarta.... The fat sow behind the desk thought it was.... She farted with satisfaction.... Good little boy.... He never paid any attention before....

Velma slowly stood erect.... It was like a field of gaudy cheap-shit imitation plastic flowers.... In an earthquake.... La Terra Trema.... She was so happy for the little tyke she couldn't resist the urge.... She had to come over.... To give him a little congratulatory pat on the head.... Where his young mind was.... Having finally discovered the beauty of

P.O.R.N.!!!

She back-handed him.... He screamed like a GIRL.... Missing his bicycle helmet.... The fucking bitch wouldn't let him wear it all day.... He knew why....

He sobbed at his face in the upstairs bathroom mirror.... Puffy.... She did it to him.... He was gonna do it to her.... Two black kids were shooting up at adjacent urinals.... They showed him how to stuff the crappers..... The sinks..... The troughs with wads of ass-wipe....

Now whadda I do? He looked at the blacks..... They looked at him (stoopid honk-boy)....

Turn on de wadda....

It was HYDROTHERAPY....

*****

Sam in toque and sun-glasses strode down Thing Street, the Custer book under his arm.

His long black hair swept over the collar of his red ski jacket. His jaws were dark with stubble. Johnny usually met him at the Cripp's Store or the Damnation Army.

Today he'd come to the Cripp's Store for the Zombies' weekly auction. They had several display cases full of things. Each camera, piece of silverware, pair of binoculars, etc. was tagged with a number for bidding.

Sam politely asked Johnny how he was doing, now that he'd been laid off. The term was inappropriate, considering that he only got a small commission on what he sold, and in his last weeks at the store he hadn't sold anything. He was the same. He was surviving. The only difference was he missed the things. In his way he was as addicted as the worst of them. He been in the store only yesterday, wondering when Romeo was going to let him sell again.

Sam said he'd heard that was the plan.

Johnny said he hoped so. It was fun, and sometimes it paid. He said maybe he shouldn't have said that to a customer.

Sam told him not to worry. Romeo told him everything. How he bought things in the States, had to pay duty, taxes, gas. The exchange rate really killed him....

What a sob story. He knew Romeo hadn't told Sam everything. Those fan-backs he bought for six hundred dollars, cost Romeo five. They were Praetorius's....

*****

Occasionally Elliott attempted to be witty, as in his attack on poor Mr. Floody, a businessman. Elliott disclosed the apparent embezzlement of some $3000 on sanitary improvements, which he couldn't discover anywhere in the Home. He scoffed at Mr. Floody's defense, a letter in which he asserted that the Board was up-to-date, and on a par with the best managed institutions of the kind in the Dominion. Elliott ironically agreed, because conditions were everywhere appalling....

Elliott punned on the absent brass taps and tapping Floody's letter, Floody's surname and the flood of light or rather illusion in which he daily saw the Home, as a close observer on Close Avenue, one street over from Dunn Avenue, suggestive of DOINGS of the Board (6) and his close relationship with Miss Martin, the Secretary: Then

Maggy has a little lamb, and did this little lamb write his own little letter (of 12th March), by his very own little self? (6).

Elliott embellished his story and, ultimately, reinforced his version of reality by finding correspondences between it and the names of the things involved in it and of the streets where they worked and lived....

*****

Johnny strolled down Thing Street to the loco J. Zeus Murphy Zombie Crypt to check out the THINGS. It was at an intersection of Thing Street and Earth, although one couldn't believe there was such a place.

The end of Thing Street. Johnny thought it was infinite, eternal; however, it descended precipitously, following some antediluvian littoral. The lake retreated across the Hardener Distressway, over the elevated walkway. He'd pause halfway, hypnotized by the lanes of traffic, like streamers at night, till someone tapped his shoulder, anxious about his Mental Hell.

The store fronts were broken dentures. The sphinx's nose after the Turks shot it off. The icing on Miss Haversham's wedding cake.... The ruins of what wasn't real to begin with....

The antiques got junkier, the dealers crazier. Some sold only lamps and lighting fixtures. One charged hundreds of dollars for cheap, ugly chandeliers from the 60s. Normals were happy to get twenty. Another slept in his store, because he lived with his mother and she'd finally thrown him out. In the evening Johnny watched him through the dirty window, watching TV on one of his old black and white sets. The worst were two fags who were going out of business after thirty years of selling. One day Johnny caught them frolicking with a bubble-pipe, like young elephants. One was deaf. The other stuttered. Everything in the store had the price written on it, or taped. They wouldn't dicker. Senile, demented idiots....

At Asylum Donuts a regular from the Crypt was sipping a coffee and reading the paper. One evening Porko and Johnny made the mistake of talking to her. She kept complaining about welfare cheats and bums. Once she started, she couldn't stop. Johnny got mad, and walked out.

Porko stayed, to finish his chocolate.

*****

Warfarin was mincing down Thing Street like he owned it, his head up his ass via his cell-phone on which he was typing to Velma.

Was his cheque there? He urgently wanted to know.

Warfarin himself hadn't lived at Velma's for 6 months but his Odious Pee still came punctually every month, half of it to cover rent he wasn't paying any more.

Velma said she'd returned it. To Citizen Hearse at Stealth and Despair.

Warfarin went craz(ier). Lying bitch! She stole it.

Velma checked the dead bolt on the front door. It was secure. She felt better.

Warfarin screamed on his cell-phone. His dealer was going to murder him. Velma'd just killed him.

Velma felt better....

*****

Glasses was on cash. She thanked him, behind the counter.

Johnny asked, for what?

Information, she said. About housing.

Johnny told her about Butch. How the CODE was getting him a pad.

The what?

Artscam only rents to artistes. So Butch qualified as an ARTISTE under The Dadanian Artiste Code....

It was a sub-section of the Dadanian Bill of Universal Rights and Freedoms....

Everybody had rights but some FOLKS more than others....

What did he do?

Decorated ghost bikes with swastikas. Painted rubber whales with Greenpeace slogans and sank them in Porkdale Park before an audience of matrons and their avid spawn on Ritalin....

So who wrote THE CODE?

Trixie Zane, Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre, Citizen Hearse, and some COW....

O, you mean Jane Jacobs.

*****

Thing Street Asylum

Johnny met him outside the Zombie Crypt. They should have gone for a coffee. They had swell resorts to choose from. Asylum Donuts. Handy Haven. Stoned Queen. Frequented by senile dements from the Fred Chopin Rest Home. Rag peddlers from Thing Street. Fronts for slumlords. Citizen Rudolph Hearse and Charles Waldorf Handy fronted for each other.

A regular (so to speak) started to harangue them. Something the matter with his neck made him hold his head at a crazy angle. The hydro-electric shock?

Quasimodo harangued them, called them the two stooges.

Quasimodo was survivor trash. He hung out at the Sally Anne. Volunteered. For first pick of all used jewelry as it came in. He'd squint at it through his genuine jeweler's loop, listing like the Titanic in A Night To Remember. He bought the best pieces and flipped them to U.S. tourists, in the harbor.

By volunteering he qualified for benefits from the social workers on Dungass. His worker cut him a cheque. Now he was doing the Crypt. His friends were pickers.

Porko asked Quasimodo if he wanted to make it three stooges.

No, he didn't.

Porko told him he'd seen one of the pickers a few minutes ago. In case he wanted to join him instead.

He didn't want to join him, either.

There was a picker dead ahead. Short-shorts, dress shoes, polo shirt, and (to top it off) a derby. Stunning!

Pickers never worked. They got packages. They could be found scouring the curb on.... Garbage Night!

Pickers got annoyed when Johnny bought what they wanted, which was all the time because they wanted everything. Trouble was, they wanted it for free.

They usually wore a pinched, mean expression. Like they'd dickered with life and life got the better deal.

There was a rumor bruited about Thing Street that all pickers eventually contracted some strange wasting disease. Some suspected Crone's Disease, but Johnny thought it was something mental. No gastro-intestinal disorder made anyone that furtive and antisocial. They only communicated with lunatics and rag-peddlers, and then in a whisper, about some incredibly valuable thing they'd secreted somewhere they never revealed .

They endeavored to placate the Crypt Zombies with stale coffees from Coffeeslime. Any cheap excuse to penetrate the sanctum where they priced the things with clicking guns. They'd never been known to buy anything....

They'd loiter at the Stoned Queen waiting for the next flat of THINGS. Then Johnny'd hear them complaining that everything was too expensive. They couldn't make any money. Everybody knew they'd only flip it....

After all, they were Pickers....

They'd haggle over shrink-wrapped baby pictures. Johnny assumed they'd haggle likewise over the babies themselves. There was a market for babies....

De gustibus....

Once Johnny saw a tiny violin in the glass case under the cash register. He showed it to a Zombie. He said a picker should buy it. To go with the babies....

Something about their fat round vacantly staring faces appealed to pickers....

They watched one waddling down Rancidvale Boulevard.

Porko bet which way he'd turn. Right into the Stoned Queen.

*****

Johnny heard his paretic irregularity, returning from the BOOZE CAN favored by Cowboy.

His cane(s), tapping Citizen Hearse-Ferrari's newly installed wood-look linoleum....

At 2 A.M. (he remembered checking his watch), something woke him.

Bruce! Staggering around his tiny apartment. Johnny put on shorts and a pair of shoes, and walked down the hall. Towards the noise.

He heard voices. He thought he recognized Bruce's. Scolding his guest, for arousing Johnny. He returned to his apartment, hearing at half-minute intervals, someone striking the wall, breaking his fall with extended palm.

Before losing consciousness again....

*****

Warfarin lost his phone. Stolen! By a room-mate in his rooming house for LOST BOYS. A young Buddhist putting himself through Street Medicine School. Warafarin told them about him last week. Porko got mad. He wasn't even a dealer.

Johnny had been to that Buddhist Temple. The crummiest bar on Thing Street. The Tibetans crouched on a bench in the window, glasses of what looked like weak dish-water on the ledge. Pale, foamy. Not much head!

Warfarin went in, to the slaughter. He was certainly good at it. He emerged less his money, but with a little piece of dead plant wrapped like a mummy's thumbnail, only smaller. He kept checking it.

But his excess of caution didn't extend to his netbook. Warfarin left it on the bed while he went to pee. His cigar-store Buddhist shoved it in his knapsack and checked out. Vixen Foxy should have done a body search. She wanted to, but one thing led to another and there was work to do. She had to find somebody to do it, or do it herself which was unthinkable).

Johnny had a spare phone that would work on Warfarin's account. All the networks were owned by the same good family. Citizen Hearse could have merged them, but he made more money this way. Clients continually switched phones, then had to pay to switch networks and vice versa as Hearse lured them now here now there with one or another rigged special.

It was a revolving door. People come, people go. At Thing Street Asylum they only counted the cure rate. There were considerably more cures than clients.

The revolving door was in turn a turbine. It drove business. To the silver chime of cash-registers.

Johnny told Porko Warfarin could have it. For free! Porko said Warfarin had to pay, or he'd just keep losing phones. Johnny figured Porko was at Citizen Hearse's establishment down Thing Street. There was always another one, down Thing Street. Hearse would check himself into some hotel, and realize he owned it!

He agreed to meet Porko and Warfarin across from Mahmoud Fukabuk's Dollar Emporium. Johnny walked slightly behind them. Their sqaw.

Warfarin wanted to know how much? Johnny suggested $10 but Porko gestured with his thumb. More! Johnny suggested $20. Porko gestured again for more. Then Warfarin (ever the sly one) wanted to see it first. So Johnny handed him the phone, which he immediately realized was a mistake.

He'd never get his money. Nice, Warfarin purred. Certainly nicer than the one he'd lost, battered with a cracked screen from one too many deals gone bad. Later he said he found it. It had probably never been lost. He just got tired of texting dealers on a cracked screen.

But now Warfarin had to get a new SIM card from the phone company. He and Johnny went into the store on Thing Street. Porko had work to do (somebody had to work). The clerk removed the battery to insert the card. He said they'd soon have to get a new one. They saw it was swollen. It should have been perfectly flat. It was slightly convex.

They met Porko at the pizza maker's around the corner. It was mainly takeout. There weren't any tables, just a counter in front of the fridge, the oven and the table where the owner kneaded the dough and dressed the pizzas. His employees sold them, slices and pop over the counter. Most people took away their orders, but a few sat on the window ledge eating. They joined them.

There wasn't much room to begin with, and now it was noon and a bus had arrived at the Thing Street stop. There was a new black guy selling. He seemed nice, but he sold off their pizza slice by slice to the bus crowd, instead of making them wait. It was understandable. They were in a hurry.

Warfarin put what was left on a paper plate in a bag to take home in his knapsack. They went east on Thing Street to the phone store. Johnny and Warfarin went inside to look for a new battery, while Porko went on to work.

Warfarin seemed to freeze except for his hands which slowly began searching his pockets. Johnny was afraid he'd lost his phone again. Warfarin painstakingly removed his money, bills and a few coins. Johnny noticed the fifty. He was LOADED!

My weed, he said. I think I lost my weed. Johnny caught the smug look, the simper. As if Warfarin was so confident he'd impressed him he didn't even bother to seek his approval; he just assumed it was there. Johnny had seen it in Butch. He would explain that he was hard up for cash and had to eat the free lunch at PORC, because this was his green week. The seeming confidence was really a boast. Johnny wanted to slap him. Everyone ran around to get him a phone, but all he cared about was fucking weed.

He didn't want to pay for it. His father wanted him to, or he'd just keep losing phones. He owed Johnny twenty dollars. He should have paid another twenty for the battery. Instead Johnny said Merry Christmas, and took out his wallet.

*****

Workman believed in diagnosis, specifically in the diagnostic power of his own practised eye (Notes Illustrative, 9)[50] and even ear. For as muscular impairment becomes more extended and more apparent (report for 1859, 18), even an experienced ear can identify a paralytic patient just by the sound of his uneven tread: The very sound of the foot on the floor is characteristic (18). Workman speaks of a way of seeing, cultivated by training and experience that enables him to penetrate appearances of life and health to a reality of disease and death. As if with the mythical X-Ray he dissolves the general paralytic's characteristically cheerful plumpness to a cynical Death's Head whose processes he

[50] Dr. Joseph Workman, `Notes illustrative of the pathology of insanity', American Journal of Insanity 17.1 (1860), 1-18.

unravels a posteriori in the mortuary. His very gaze seems deadly; if not exactly lethal in itself, it marks the living for a death it exposes as its vindication and triumph and subsequently its entertainment and reward. Through his musings and broodings what sharply emerges is the pattern: the arrival, the deceptive appearance or even apparent improvement, the gaze, the aggravation of the condition, death, and a few hours later the autopsy....

*****

He heard him, descending the dark-varnished stairs. Indignant that Porko had accused him of making noise.

Just because he had a disability, couldn't he get sloppy drunk, fall upstairs, and stagger around all night banging MITZI without some LIAR snitching on him?

He'd hear from his lawyer!

Johnny couldn't help noticing needle-marks all over his arms, the bruised hand where he'd been breaking his falls, or Mitzi....

No, it wasn't POVERTY ACTIVISM!

It was DEBAUCHERY!

It wasn't eviction however, like he deserved. It was only a WARNING. They'd had a complaint, from some unspecified long-suffering client-neighbor, the kind whose advocate he said he was but really wasn't.

Two MORE, and the cumbersome czarist machinery would finally begin to GRIND his ASS.

*****

The bailiff told Butch he'd pass to serve him the papers around 11:30. Butch said that was good, because he usually turned his phone on at 11 A.M. In fact, Butch left his phone on overnight so he'd hear the bailiff when he called to serve him, then he got so drunk he slept through the call anyway. He marched over to PORC, got the FREE LUNCH, and did the usual PORC things.

He loitered on the sidewalk with bums and mad people, complained when the dining room opened late (as usual), and got the FREE LUNCH. It wasn't enough, so he supplemented it with a grilled cheese from the greasy spoon across the street. Still, no bailiff, so he flipped open his cell-phone and thoughtlessly dialed the first number he saw. It was the bailiff's.

The bailiff said he'd called at 9 in the morning. Where was Butch? Butch figured he'd tricked the bailiff, by leaving the phone on after he said he was turning it off. He didn't realize he'd have the number right there, if he'd phoned. Ah!

The bailiff said he'd try again, after he spoke to the worker about changing the date. Butch immediately wanted to know what he meant. They obviously had an agenda.

He hung up and returned to PORC, to ask his ambulance chaser to write the bailiff, and demand an explanation. He quoted Euripides, The American Declaration of Independence, and Martin Luther King's Letter from Birmingham Jail.

That evening he recounted the day's events to Johnny. Johnny suggested that he ask the ambulance chaser to have the papers forwarded to her. Butch was concerned that he wouldn't get enough time to scrutinize them, but Johnny said the chaser could probably get him more time, too. Butch should set the agenda, himself.

Johnny met him the next morning on the street in front of PORC. Butch explained. He'd slept in, and missed his ambulance chaser. Johnny told him to call her at her office. Butch explained. His phone was dead. He didn't like to leave it plugged in, in case it started a fire.

Johnny knew that the total number of fires started by cell-phones was zero, but he said nothing. He didn't want to trigger another episode.

Butch reminded him sagely, quoting Koffee A. Andand, better safe than sorry. Hadn't the fire at TWIN TOWERS been caused by bad wiring? Johnny noted that this was the first time Butch conceded it was an electrical fire. He'd always insisted it was Max the Butcher, smoking marijuana in bed with Trixie Zane. Johnny showed him burn-marks beside the light fixtures, but Butch hated Max.

*****

They hated Children's Aid. Children's Aid stayed up all night plotting to steal Thing Street babies. Then they stole their parents' rights. Before anybody knew grew up and got all the rights themselves. They knew what was what. They didn't want to see Thing Street parents.

Pioneers of Alienation

Carlotta was always hanging out at the GODWILL down Thing Street. A celebrated CASE. She made the SUPPER HOUR NEWS. She lost her kids to Children's Aid, who lost them to a couple of crackheads on the corner. Johnny ran into the crackheads occasionally, at the PERSIAN's. He never saw Frick and Frack. The PERSIAN said they came into his store to get warm. He gave Frick a pair of gloves. Frack needed a winter coat. They caught cold, and died in a freak snow storm.

Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre got involved. She turned the incident into an advertisment for $CAMH and Hearse Homes Glowball. If only there'd been a room for her in Emile Durkheim's TWIN TOWER, or a bed at Oakridge or Yucca Flats or any of a number of similar resorts, Frick wouldn't have DIED. She wouldn't have been fine, but she'd have been ALIVE.

Carlotta did radio spots with Mitzi and Trixie, pitching MODEL SUITES for GIRL ORPHANS. Like Frick, but not Frick....

*****

Elmo asked Johnny if he'd heard.

Heard WHAT? He never let on. He knew NOTHING.

Junkies glared at them, for blocking their access to Psycho Farm AC/DC.....

Their morning juice and methadone....

Butch was charged with assault, for those death threats, when Porko brought a Census worker to his door one night.

Hollerith cards!

The Census worker had subsequently been institutionalized in Thing Street, with trauma-induced borderline disorder....

Krakpotkin covertly attended Butch's hearing. Butch brought a woman nobody'd ever seen before or after. She had a kid with her, also rented for the occasion. From the same escort service. He also presented a fat binder full of enrollment forms for $CAMH anger management courses he'd downloaded last night from the world-wide web and rapidly completed as evidence of his efforts to TRANSFORM himself. The judge dismissed it as GARBAGE but during recess Krakpotkin surprised everyone by asking to read it. He said it was interesting. He wanted to know how it turned out.

Butch knew they'd met. It must have been a bar. Because they were drinking. Then again, no. Because they were drinking orange juice. They were in a store. But what kind of store would have let them drink orange juice, like it was some sort of restaurant. Ah, now he remembered. It was a DRUG store. The PsychoFarmAC/DC. They met in at the Methadone Clinic! A small world, but he wouldn't want to paint it. Was it Tang (c)?

Presiding Judge Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre said the time had come to determine his debt to Society, in the form of William Rudolph Hearse.

His debt? To Citizen Hearse? Is that what it was all about? Where was Citizen Hearse when a lonely, starving client cried himself to sleep in a Psychome, with a bunch of crack-heads, junkies, and survivors. The only guys had a chance, were Fellini's goons. He had to string along....

Everyone said, it didn't really matter. For years social workers, poverty advocates, and legal aid lawyers had convinced themselves that Butch and Bruce were BOTH at Death's Door. Perhaps it enabled them to rationalize all the bother they caused them, in meritless cases and nuisance calls. They even speculated how long they had, and placed bets on the HAPPY DAY.

Judge Weasel-Theatre was like-minded. As much as she longed to put him away forever, she decided it was better to let nature take its course.

He had a BRAIN VIRUS. He was CRASH VICTIM....

For intriguing with Butch and other unfortunates, Bruce was sentenced to HOUSE ARREST!

*****

Bruce considered himself an advocate.

Johnny knew. He was a GANGSTER! A THUG!

He was guilty of CRIMINAL CONSPIRACY!

Meddling in Citizen Hearse's PRIVATE AFFAIRS.

Amanda! Mitzi! Trixie! Et al....

It was contrary to the common good, which, except for such distractions, was always uppermost in Hearse-Ferrari's mind.

Thing Street Asylum

The one attenuating circumstance, everyone who became Bruce's client, got evicted two weeks later. He was better than the Tribunal.

Bruce complained, to anyone who'd listen. He was being persecuted, for advocacy (gangsterism, thuggery). Johnny knew. It was for bad habits. Street drugs, on top of all that clozapine. On Dadania Day he wanted to celebrate like every other red-blooded Dadanian boy....

Just because he had a disability, couldn't he disturb his neighbors, shake grease and cigarette-stained copies of the Universal Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms under everyone's nose, entertain the crooks and gangsters Hearse-Ferrari most wanted out, refer darkly to his Viking Blood and consequences whenever within hearing of anyone who'd ever remotely criticized his drunken disorderliness?

So like Bruce, Elmo simpered. Never wrong!

All he needed to do was say, I'm sorry (Maitre!), it won't happen again (Excellency!). Only Johnny knew, it was already TOO LATE.

Bruce was a KOMODO!

Elmo worried. The said if he didn't join THE PARTY he'd be PURGED. Hearse-Ferrari wanted to liquidate his old clients. They didn't PAY (enough) any more.

He didn't want CLIENTS. He wanted CLIENTELE! It was more than semantics. It was MONEY!

So what if it WAS? Johnny wondered. Siding with losers, would only make it faster.

Elmo had a list of Butch's outrages. How he BORROWED his laptop and REFUSED to give it back. Instead, he forced him to take his desktop. Elmo carried it into his apartment, plugged it in, and pressed ON. The fan wheezed, but the machine didn't boot up. It didn't work. It stank! Stale piss, ciggies, and marijuana. He immediately carried it all the way back to Butch's apartment on the Beastly side of the building, and tapped gently on his door, so as not to arouse his well-known anti-social tendencies. Eventually Butch opened it a crack, so as not to release his cats, releasing instead the stench of stale piss, ciggies, and marijuana. It worked when I gave it to you, he lied. Smashing the door in his face.

Elmo never got his laptop back, or even a working desktop, but Butch came to his door regularly. For money. He'd knock softly, but if he suspected Elmo was home and not answering, he'd start whispering at him, through the keyhole.

Pssst! Elmo! I know you're home. I saw you enter, from the BOOZE CAN. I'm not going to beat you up, I just want to TALK to you.

He knew what about. Always the same thing....

It was curious, how he couldn't stand even a census-worker showing up at his door, but didn't mind showing up at anyone else's door, himself, whenever he pleased, for MONEY, which he wouldn't go till he obtained.

Elmo tormented himself. What if Citizen Hearse-Ferari finally kicked him out, he went to live with his mother, Butch went to live with HIS mother, their MOTHERS were neighbors, Butch's mother invited her friends to their house-warming, she forgot to buy sugar, they RAN OUT of sugar, and the next thing he knew there's BUTCH at the door....

PSSST! Thanks for the SUGAR (HONEY!). I'm not going to beat you up....

*****

In the second part of his essay in The Canada Lancet 11.1 (1878), Workman attempts another definition of Paresis. It is painless, or at least without head-pain (1), mainly afflicts men, and advances, or rather has been thought to advance, in three stages:

> It has been usual to speak of the first stage as that of incubation; of the second, as that of full development, or pronounced maniacal disorder; and of the third as that of established dementia, with unequivocal subversion of both bodily and mental competency. (2)

He extracts the most melodramatic elements from the situation, as he describes the patient's weeping friends, after reason no longer holds sway, forced to submit him to the extrinsic control of the asylum (2). The tableau seems to be almost a part of the disease, another symptom at the end of the first stage.

Usually the first physical manifestation, which would mark the beginning of the second stage, is that peculiar blunting of speech articulation, or tongue-lameness, which so closely resembles the thickened utterance of drunk persons (3). Other symptoms include a paretic irregularity in the gait (3), and the third a keen appetite, than which

no symptom is more significant (3). This might alone have led to some diagnostic confusion, suggests this Irish doctor, because of the normal voracity of English eaters.

Workman illustrates the final stage with the case of one Sam Alderdice, formerly an expert hunter, whose only word for food was duck, his gastronomic beau-ideal (3). He is Thomas Moore's vase in which roses have once been distilled (3-4), broken but dignified somewhat by some vestigial capacity for what it once held whole. Ever the moralist and social critic, Workman cannot forbear drawing the obvious moral:

> The mind that gathers and skilfully distills the roses blooming on life's pathway, may, even when shattered by disease, give out fragrant perfumes, whilst that which has become saturated with the foetid emanations of poisonous weeds, must disgust, or corrupt, all that approach it. (4)

*****

Osama knocked Cowboy off the Beastly steps. He got brain damage, and died in Thing Street. Porko's predecessor as Super at Emile Durkheim committed suicide by taking too many pills and died a few blocks down Thing Street. Fellini, Butch, and the rest of THE OLD GANG ransacked his apartment before anyone could remove his body. Then they forged his last welfare cheque....

The THIRD last Super stayed on after she resigned, but had trouble with the stairs, so she'd throw her garbage over the fire-escape. It stank in the summer. In the winter, froze to the ground, so Porko scraped it off, and the shit from her old dog, that she never cleaned up after. The dog died, and she moved into a highrise, with an elevator and NO PETS.

Elmo waxed nostalgic. He'd lived in Emile Durkheim longer than anyone else. It was urban archaeology.

He remembered Deaf Dyke who threw the phone book on the floor every night around 3 A.M. He assumed it was deliberate, and she drank. Being deaf, she couldn't have heard it anyway. When Elmo moved in she ignored him, after she learned he was single and didn't even have a girlfriend.

She had several. Walking home with one from THE BOOZE CAN, she noticed the bottle of beer under her leather jacket. When the girlfriend wouldn't give her any, she wrestled the beer away from her. The cops arrested them, and fined the dyke a hundred dollars for drinking in public. They resumed their argument, back in THIRTEEN. The dyke screamed so much, nobody slept on that side of the building. Citizen Hearse disliked dykes when they gave it away FREE to their girlfriends. Elmo heard her screaming again, at the mail box, when she saw the LETTER with the TWO-HEADED EAGLES on the envelope, return address the SIMIAN SANDS....

One of her girlfriends was her predecessor in THIRTEEN. She hung out with her, hoping to get her apartment back. It was probably her, throwing the phone book on the floor. When the dyke got evicted, she tried to take over, but CITIZEN HEARSE never forgave a bad tenant, or knew a good one....

During her heyday Deaf Dyke shared Johnny's apartment with 4 or 5 people. It consisted of one large room that he used as kitchen and livingroom combined, and a small bug-infest bedroom. To access the bathroom, you had to pass through the bedroom. It would have been crowded, without any privacy, everyone using everything and everyone else, and trying to steal the apartment. Johnny'd noticed the damaged door frame, that had been repaired so many times the molding resembled tumescent scar tissue. Underneath the landlord paint was graffiti about legalizing dope.

Johnny's predecessors in THIRTEEN. Elmo remembered other clients in other apartments, but Johnny was getting tired. They were typically in bad health. Elmo watched them decline. Most of them were dead. Dead Guy was already. He'd find someone collapsed on the sidewalk. Then in a wheelchair. Then missing an arm, or a leg. They were usually alcoholic, and diabetic. They died right there, under the Edwardian attributes.

*****

Johnny heard the broom banging the dark-varnished baseboards again and looked out his spyglass, down Peacock Alley.

A paretic irregularity in the gait?

Warfarin! He was so young! He invited him in.

Let's talk, he said. Why hadn't he kept his appointment with the Bluecoats. That unleashed a well-rehearsed tirade of self-pitying excuses. His life was so messed-up right now. He couldn't handle it. He owed everybody money. He was fighting with his mother (and his mother was winning). He wished he was dead.

Johnny said he was sorry, but Warfarin might at least have phoned the Manager, to say he'd be dead....

O, why don't I die right now.

Johnny said he thought that was selfish. He owed everybody money....

Warfarin said Johnny was the last person he'd told. The last person he'd even talked to.

Johnny said there was a streetcar every 20 minutes. Maybe one had his name on it....

*****

Later, Johnny started to think. What if Warfarin killed himself? Wasn't Johnny responsible? Of course he was! He could live with it. He meant legally. Could anybody live with Johnny, that was the question. Not very likely! Especially knowing what he knew, didn't exactly discourage, had even planted in his mind. He regretted the crack about the streetcar. You were lucky if you caught one in 45 minutes. He pictured Warfarin, tapping his foot in the gutter, arms crossed. Forget about the ten lousy dollars. Johnny figured their secret was safe. He just hoped nobody'd overheard them.

He felt he had to cover his ass. So he called Porko. Let's talk!

Johnny said he'd acted out in front of him. He thought he should call 911. Porko said it was a routine. A schtick. He'd called 911 lots of times. The cops were always coming to Velma's to take him away. To Thing Street. He threatened to jump off the roof of the food bank where he volunteered. Nobody thought he'd do it. Someone else did it. Which proved not that he never would, but that he always could. His last birthday party was a bust. Even the food bank got tired of his emotional blackmail, and sent a cop car over to take him into Thing Street for an assessment.

*****

Warfarin was mincing down Thing Street. He'd just hit Porko for 10 dollars. Literally. Fortunately he'd ducked the broom handle. The mop was still abandoned on the dark-varnished stairs, where he'd hurled it.

He wanted to get high. Gimme 10 dollars!

He had his head up his ass, via his cell-phone. He was typing to Muffy. He wanted to get high. He had 10 dollars. How much heroine could he get?

Muffy had been to Home Hardware just that morning. The white squirrels were spared!

*****

Warfarin didn't notice Johnny coming UP Thing Street.

Convergence of the twain.

Johnny said, HI THERE!

That was enough to set off his hair-trigger mechanism. He hung up on Muffy and started shouting.

Why was he MAD at DADDY?

Johnny calmly replied that he wasn't MAD at DA-DA at all. He was MAD at HIM. For being SUCH A SHIT!

Half the junky alkies of Thing Street peered out the dives from Emile Durkheim House to Aslyum Donuts. You rang?

Warfarin wanted to know how it was any of Johnny's business.

Johnny said it was his duty as a Citizen of the Reich.

Warfarin simpered. He was finally getting the recognition he deserved. He was PUBLIC ENEMY!

*****

Johnny was talking to Josef outside Asylum Donuts about the atrocities he'd experienced at the National Socialist-run LOVE CAMPS INCORPORATED.

Josef was still in the denial stage. Sure, he knew the counselors were mainly a bunch of war criminals who'd infiltrated the Satrapy in the 50s giving yet another meaning to Thing Street Asylum.

Yes, he'd heard about the Mimico Solution.

Their experiments that did not work out were buried three deep in unmarked graves in a quiet park overlooking beautiful Lake Hogtarry at Thing Street Mimico.

Still, he reasoned, they weren't nearly as bad as George Bush and HE was a REPUBLICAN!

Johnny said they were just a bunch of early boomers. Like Elvira! She would have made a great National Socialist. Living in a compound, peering out the window from the plush back seat of her chauffeured limosouine at the locos eating shade-grown melons on the front steps of her slave cabin. Her value system was in her clothing, totally antebellum Fascist.

Elvira exploited every perverted schtick. Machine to machine. Internet of things. Johnny figured she'd automated her cunt wirelessly with a bunch of Radio Shack sensors. It still didn't work but she got a thrill every time her neighbors watched TV or opened their garage with a remote.

She was an unsustainable development. Unbearable, really.

Warfarin was on the patio, listening. Waiting! To talk to Johnny.

Pioneers of Alienation

Josef wondered if Johnny followed popular culture. Because he thought it was exhausted.
Thinking of the thing Store, Johnny agreed.
Vinyl records were back. That was the first time a medium had returned and replaced what had displaced it.

Johnny couldn't help having mixed feelings about that. It had never really gone. Hard as he'd tried, he'd never got rid vinyl in the first place, and now it worse than ever.
It was history....

It was strictly boutique business, recycling reversed. Johnny's Thing Store as Art Gallery. Things that should have gone to landfill, elevated as art.
Imhotep's Colossus. In a Cairo parking lot....

It pissed him off. Hipsters stealing his Schtick!

That confirmed it. There was nothing new. Popular culture was on the skids, it was trash to start and it never stopped.

Josef took off for the Thing Store. He said there was one just like it up on Spoor West. If he'd known, he'd never have bothered. Since he was here, he'd check it out.
That store sure was sad, too.

Johnny'd worked there forever and never figured it out. It was a chain. There was one in every zone. None of them was thriving....

Romeo was worse than Citizen Hearse. Every time he owed the Falls the Hydro man came over. He couldn't exactly turn them off, or take the water back.
Just don't look in the basement.

Josef thought he looked hot in Raybans on a supercycle. At Humbug International the starry-eyed hipsters said an old man like him should drive an Olds. The things that came out of their mouths....
Johnny said he was more concerned about what went into their assholes....

Warfarin came over as Josef rode off in a huff. It was just like an office. He thought he'd write a broadside about how green he was. Doing business in a parking lot saved on A/C as well as parking....

He said he wanted to apologize to Johnny for having been such a complete asshole.
Johnny knew. Always a set-up....

*****

On Thing Street Johnny met the dead with the living, waiting for the light. Doc Workman. Killuh Sharke. Charlie Elliot.
They objected to Edwardian Classicism....
The same bad architecture had offended everyone for a century....
Johnny wondered what more it took to be one of them himself, there was so little difference between them and us. Between them and Professor C. Lamprini Eel, none at all.

*****

Take correspondences to be complete:
neat jars of cooking oil, in a neat
translation into stoves, and so much heat;
expansion, and contraction of concrete;
your breathing, and the breathing of the street;
construction workers with an iron sheet.

*****

Only Deane didn't fit in....

Thing Street Asylum

*****

He'd wanted a manufacturing job. It was delusional thinking. He was forty, with bad knees, and factory jobs weren't so plentiful anymore. In reality, he'd been trapped, like everyone else. He'd been a student, an athlete, a treasury department analyst, an airplane pilot, before he came to the House and entered their delusional fabric; they'd never known him....

*****

Porko got the call. From Citizen Hearse! To escort Bruce to Thing Street Clinic. For an assessment.

Porko let himself in, with the master key.

What took you? I nearly bled to death!

He'd folded his clothes with a protractor and stacked them in neat piles. Likewise, everything else. Cans of soup and tuna, change, paper money. There were so many piles, he had difficulty walking.

No, over there! He barked at him to get him a fresh pair of jeans. His current pair looked like somebody'd tried to tear it off him. He'd obviously been beat up, and robbed. He asked Porko for a spare set of keys.

He didn't have any. He'd have to order a set. From Beijing! Moreover, he was under orders. They cost money! 50 bucks for customs duties, paper work, etc. Actually he had a whole shoe box full of them in his sanctuary. They were all the same, but nobody'd ever bothered to try his key in somebody else's door.

Bruce wondered if under the circumstances he wouldn't make an exception. They'd stolen all his MONEY!

Porko agreed. Maybe he could do something. But not without AUTHORITY! He dialed Hearse's private number and waited patiently for the great man to tear himself from the sinking fund....

Maitre, he pleaded. Maybe we'd better waive the replacement fee. He's been robbed. He has NO MONEY!

It wasn't a speaker phone, but they both heard his loud hissing like gas leaking into the room. They could almost smell it!

If he doesn't get the keys, he added sotto voce, he'll never go to THING STREET! We'll NEVER get RID of him!

The hissing stopped immediately. Hmmm, he considered. Waive it! Aren't I a NICE GUY?

Yes, Maitre. Excellent, even!

Then spread the word! CLICK!!!

Here, he said. Take!

But - but - w-what about Beijing? The GREAT KAHN!

They're all the same, he said. Meaning the keys.

Citizen Hearse? The GREAT KAHN!!!

Don't worry about it! He obviously didn't get it. He turned away, while he replaced the tattered jeans.

Trixie Zane was in Reception. She said he did it to himself.

Johnny wanted to turn it into an article and submit it to Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre's new THING STREET SURVIVOR BULLETIN. It wasn't the sort of uplift she liked to publish. She'd probably try to kick him off her mailing list. Then when she discovered he wasn't even on it, she'd escalate and start acting out. She'd tear that new party dress Citizen Hearse got her. They'd be short beds, so she'd be put in restraints and shipped to THE CLINIC.

Trixie'd be in Reception. She'd say IT WAS HER....

SHE DID IT TO HERSELF....

*****

Porko requested his presence in the airing court. A sun-burnt stump lot, under rusting fire-escapes....

He wanted to make AN ANNOUNCEMENT....

Johnny heard heavy garbage bags rustle and bounce against the fire-escape before they finally struck the hard ground of the alley, with a dull thud. They contained the mortal remains and waste of what he smelled in the hall when he went out in the morning and came back at night. It was mainly cans and cardboard boxes, and the occasional carcass of a chicken wrapped in plastic like the entrails of a mummy, or a mummy baby.

Vagrants stumbled over them all night, and swore.

Natasha was the principal suspect. Her room was directly above the pile and, with her bulk and infirmity, she had a motive for not taking her garbage downstairs and depositing it in one of the pales that Porko emptied once a week.

Porko refused to remove the bags. They exploded, and the plastic stuck to the ground like skin. They'd be there next spring.....

The pails were lined up neatly against the fence.

The ones with lids were empty. The garbage was piled high beside them in yellow No Frillies grocery bags. Porko stuffed them into the green ones he put on the curb.

The pails without lids were full. In the winter residents wouldn't even be bothered to clean off the snow, to remove the lids and put their garbage inside.

To judge by the weathered sign nailed into the brick wall, warning drivers that unauthorized vehicles would be towed, it had been the parking lot. Old Natasha brought her dog back there to shit. A decrepit German shepherd. Citizen Hearse periodically ordered her to clean it up with the snow shovel. A plastic one that he'd found at Funnyside last summer.

After the dog collapsed and died one morning, a rumor grew that she'd buried it back there with the same shovel. Things, too....

Porko sprawled on one of two cheap folding chairs behind an ugly green coffee table that he'd put out because there wasn't any room in his apartment. His was the super's suite, the show-piece, which in Emile Durkheim House was still too small.

The tenants were listening, their windows lit up along their fire escapes like Christmas lights. Porko invited him to sit.

What was wrong?

The kids, he revealed. Herman, Little Joe, and Eva. They ignored him at the Zombie Crypt. They treated him like a criminal. Why?

Porko told him. Little Eva says you killed Deane. You shot him!

Ridiculous, Johnny said. Deane was his inspiration, his friend at Emile Durkheim House. Deane shot himself.

Then he realized Porko's strategy. The tenants were listening, through the muck of psychotropic medication. Everything stuck in that mud, and stayed. Fossilized!

To them he would always be....

A MURDERER!

Over the sirens, he heard Porko inquire, in his politest voice, what else he thought was buried there, with Natasha's dog?

When did they throw the switch?

*****

Dear Judge Weasel-Theatre!

Your Honour!

Yesterday morning I was privileged to attend your levy. While I fully expected to be relegated to the lowest echelons, I had hoped at least to speak to your wine steward about a privacy issue. As you may know, our personal data was leaked out of the Thing Street Dole Office to the Business Improvement Association who then sold it to local slumlords. I was among those affected, and hoped that with your well-placed connections Your Honour would recover our data.

I addressed my concerns to the Maitre 'D. She interrupted me, made annotations on a clipboard, and handed me a menu without once looking me in the eye, like I was a non-person.

I began to order and had already replied in the affirmative when I realized I was being asked if I liked to tongue.

I returned to the Maitre 'D and asked why, for a privacy issue, I was being asked if I liked to tongue, but again I was totally ignored by her. I had to ask a waiter why for a privacy issue I was being asked if I liked to tongue. The maitre'd was stony-faced.

A busboy then approached and announced that the maitre'd must have handed me the wrong menu by mistake. He defended her, saying that she must not have known the issue. I told him that I'd told her the issue, and had even shown her the letter from Odious Pee about the leak. The busboy admitted there'd been a mistake, and handed me a meal card for the Franciscans.

I wondered why the Maitre D' herself hadn't said so, and thought that a simple apology would have been in order. There was none forthcoming from the receptionist for her mistake - if it was a mistake and not some deliberate antagonism. Given that the receptionist never once even looked directly at me let alone apologized - I'm inclined to think it was the latter and that she probably has issues with men and white men who like tongue especially. I can't think of any other reason for her absolute refusal to acknowledge my existence.

I deeply resent your harvesting of my personal data, specifically my position on tonguing – before I'd even spoken to the Chef!

I have therefore decided to seek refreshment elsewhere.

Sincerely
Whitey N Brown

*****

Johnny never did anything medical right away. He preferred to visit the doctor's office once or twice before his appointment. This appointment was only for blood work, a cholesterol test, but it posed a problem because he had to fast for 12 hours before it. He hoped the fast didn't include coffee, because when he went longer than 8 hours without coffee he got sick. He got a headache and puked.

The Lab was on the ground floor of a brand new 10 story building on Rancidvale. Conveniently across the street from The Ptolemy Lodge, the Old Fucks' home.

The Lab did a brisk business in blood and urine from the folks. St. Joseph's Hospital was one block west. The locos called it Joe's Garage. Once Johnny sent someone there, from the group home where he worked. The man was diagnosed with schizophrenia (it changed from month to month); he'd beat up his support worker. The psychiatrist at Joe's Garage was sending him home, without even adjusting his meds. Johnny said he was sorry to be such a nag, but he had schizophrenia, and he'd just beat up his colleague. Which he'd wanted to do himself, for years.

The shrink said people got beat up in bars all the time, and giggled. He was a young psychiatrist. Johnny reminded him. It was a residential treatment facility. By then the man was beating up someone else, right at the hospital....

The receptionist was on break, but there was a big roll of tickets, as in a bakery, so he took one. Everybody had to take a number. His was seven.

Hearing a familiar hoarse voice, Johnny recognized a woman from the Crazy House. Well, he heard her say philosophically, to the social worker escorting her, I have this problem. Which it looks like I'll have for the rest of my life, till the day I die....

O, perish that thought. Johnny'd heard it all before, but he'd never heard schizophrenia described like that.

The trooper, soldiering through. She'd once run screaming from the TV room after watching a show about people who heard voices and talked to them. What else could she mean? Halitosis?

Her worker wandered off into another part of the building, probably to get a coffee. Seeing Johnny, her personality changed. She turned cheerful, and friendly. The sort you'd want to be your pal. Johnny knew split personality didn't exist, except as a con to manipulate workers with. Like now.

How are yuh, JOHNNY?

Not bad, he always said. Adding portentously, surviving. They were all psychiatric survivors, disabled.

Her worker returned, and she resumed suffering. It was as if Johnny didn't exist, which was the case and suited him fine. He didn't want to discuss the Crazy House, their principal reason for being there. She probably didn't want to discuss it either. He could almost hear her. She'd say, I don't want to think about the past. Let bygones be bygones, I always say.

He wondered if she'd had coffees this morning. She had 3 or 4 before breakfast. With plenty of sugar. She was probably suffering from concurrent withdrawal. He figured she'd cheated. He had. He was a typical cynic. He couldn't believe that anyone could be less dishonest than himself.

The worker returned. Her number was up. He heard her whimper when the Philippino nurse stuck the needle in her arm. Ouchy, ouchy! He wished he could have done it.

She whimpered as they gathered up her things, chiefly her ubiquitous foolscap. I'm a good woman, she pleaded. She must have thought they were going to stab her again. I don't hurt anybody. I read. I do knitting. I have my writing, she said, as the worker slowly escorted her off the premises.

Then Johnny's number was up....

*****

Romeo would point through the windshield at a pedestrian waddling ahead of them, across the road.

We're so afraid of death, but it doesn't exist, we'll never know it, we're all like that woman up ahead, the center of her universe, wanting to get across before the light changes.

Then he'd step on it....

*****

C.K. Clarke opposed further integration with the General Hospital, in favor of a separate institution.

He exploited the figure of the person in the street, rendered all the more pathetic as an old woman, "a poor old person whose brain happened to be affected by its arteries, or something like that" (27).

She who would presumably have been better off at his clinic with its "research laboratories and all the other laboratory essentials in the modern treatment of this class of patient" (30).

It is interesting that Clarke chose, as the typical beneficiary of his facility, someone - a chronic patient, a case of senile dementia -- who would not have gone there, but to Thing Street Asylum.[51]

*****

Dear White Community Member....

Regarding respectful interactions with my servants, I am concerned that you are alleging prejudice and racism in your complaint. You indicate that you are inclined to think that wait staff's behaviours were based on anti-male and anti-white prejudice and racism, just because during your audience she seemed captivated by a bug on the wall behind you.

Regarding racism, I wanted to highlight that, as you know, the Ministry of Lotteries, Asylums and Casinos is an organization that works with community members to fight for social justice including advancing social and economic rights, racial and sexual equality by placing one-armed bandits wherever white trash congregate and legalizing dope as sold by Hearse-Ferrari's Molecular Science Corporation. In doing so, we reject allegations of "reverse racism" or "reverse sexism". Here is an article about the issue in which a leading Thing Street human rights lawyer and vaudeville act discusses the proper way to apply White Face.

If you should decide to come back to our resort for any reason, please do reach out to my maitr'd first. He can rehearse with you the proper niceties and finer points of etiquette to observe....

In other words, white boy....

Your exaggerated sense of entitlement proceeds from the forgone conclusion, that you should be suffered to exist.

Dat aint so!

Based on the evidence before me [fart! whinny!], I'm not inclined to believe that your rights have been violated, or indeed, that you got any.

Love,

Foxy.

*****

When he was on welfare he shuffled everywhere.... He got a really good idea of some of the folks that weren't on it..... Hipsters....

And some of the things who were.... Himself.... Bums.... Shabby.... Sleeping in the doorways of abandoned store-fronts....

Johnny passed by his own thing store.... It was dying too.... The love-death.... Gaping dressers.... Gutted armchairs.... Abandoned on the curb.... Pieces of garbage blowing down Thing Street.... Torn signs.... BOOKS 25 CENTS....

Thanks to Romeo and his affairs.... Thing Street was haunted by them.... Ever since that meeting with Moll.... Johnny striding down Thing Street.... Enjoying the weather.... A fine spring day.... Even if he was on his way to the thing store.... Deliveries....

He met Moll just as he emerged from the underpass.... Grand Ole Nestor Doc Joseph Workman's aesthetically-pleasing steam-age railroad trestle.... The moat that separated Thing Street from the rest of humanity....

She was standing right there in bright leotards.... Under a pylon.... Like she'd just emerged from the bushes.... On the former grounds of the Mercy Reformatory and Home for Unwed Mothers....

Mother-Fucks.... Johnny muttered under his breath....

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[51] In the second piece he left behid, "The Personal Influence of the Physician in the Treatment of Mental Cases," Mr. Alger seemed to echo C. K. Clarke himself, by arguing for a more "individual" approach -- which toward the end of Clarke's tenure at the Asylum, is still far from the reality. He urges physicians to tailor their authority according to kind of patient. "Semi-intelligent and poorly educated" patients only understand "brute force," so have to be dealt with by the attendants, though at the cost of any remaining self-respect. But "intelligent and educated" patients ought to be the responsibility of the superintendent and his assistants, since such patients are capable of recognizing and appreciating their authority. But this clearly a reciprocal relationship. Unless acutely ill, they will make their own "mental estimate" of the doctors. Many patients know that "they are not what they should be," so will submit to the doctor's authority, provided that he displays "character and intelligence." It is therefore in the doctors' interest to be courteous and considerate of these patients. The better the first impression, the greater the chance of a cure. Conversation, "views and timely observations," the very sort of things doctors have least time for, would do as much as "drugs, baths, etc."

Mr. Alger concludes that Doctors should be men of "striking personality," notable for "culture, delicacy and learning," not "despots, as has often been the case, in the past." Meanwhile many doctors continue to behave coarsely, or conduct themselves in a manner "socially inferior" to "intelligent and refined patients." Patients are treated as "general merchandise," and "voluntary patients" -- ie., like himself -- have to "leave their individuality outside the hospital doors" -- which he for one is loathe to do. So much for the rhetoric of an "individual approach." Suffering acutely from the effects of tubercular peritonitis, and depressed over his blighted prospects, Mr. Alger repeatedly attempted to commit suicide -- his own life was conspicuous for the absence of anything like "personal influence."

Thing Street Asylum

Off to the store? Moll asked.... Yeah.... Johnny paused.... I'm never going back there.... Moll took a drag on her ciggy.... Yeah? Why?.... She exhaled through her button nose.... Her hair was bright orange.... Her nylon wind-breaker accentuated her full physique.... Romeo's playing head games.... He's fooling around with things' heads....

Johnny remembered the plastic skull with day-glo eyes.... He hung it in an abandoned bird cage.... Carlotta had wanted it really bad.... He called it MR BONES.... Games....

That bitch for one thing.... She meant Carlotta.... Moll said Carlotta was talking about him.... With that weirdo Porko.... And Romeo too.... How he'd fired him.... For bringing the heat around.... Later they all had coffee in THE SLIME.... Moll.... Romeo.... Carlotta.... Carlotta let on that Johnny must have done something really aweful....

The Beautiful Carlotta.... She called herself a web-site designer.... She was designing all right.... Not that kind of web.... She was in a shelter (again).... With her kids....

Johnny was no Puritan.... Carlotta was twenty-something.... Those kids of hers.... He didn't give a shit about them.... She was bad for business.... Romeo should have been out buying more things for him to sell.... So far as Johnny was concerned....

Carlotta wasn't the only one.... There was Dr. Trixie Zane.... Anne Bolyn.... Mrs. Howard Hughes.... Gunga Dinn.... Heywood-Wakefield.... Mahogany Dining-Room Suite.... Izitolde.... Rogers Cable.... Upright Piano.... Any number of street-walkers....

Dr. Trixie Zane had a hygiene problem.... Never washed her hair.... Stank.... Johnny remembered how she threw a fit in the store.... After he balled her out for never picking up her things.... Her buffet..... Her desk.... None of it paid for.... Really it was because she wanted her Romeo.... She lost control when Johnny wouldn't give her his number.... He didn't have it.... She didn't believe him.... Got personal.... Balled him out.... He put a hand on her shoulder.... Eased her out.... Screaming.... Frantically pulling at the door.... Gimme Romeo's number.... Jack (Was) Every Inch A. Sailor warned him.... She wouldn't be through with him until it was established.... Irrefragably proven.... He'd put his hand on her pussy.... Muttering obscenities....

Anne Boleyn.... Had a taste for head.... For pulling it off.... A regular head-hunter.... Only she hadn't scored in twenty years.... Had to be handled gently.... Tense biter.... Busy schedule.... Lady Jane waiting in the wings....

Who was Mrs. Howard Hughes.... Howard took a walk in the desert.... Many impersonated.... Nobody equalled.... She moped around her public relations firm.... Making fortunes.... Her husband left her plenty of those.... Boring.... High-class.... Disinterested.... Romeo couldn't score.... Drove him crazy....

There was Gunga Dinn.... To have fun with.... Looking for HER SAILOR.... Didn't mind if there was one in every port.... So long as she was the only one in this port.... She wanted to see an upholstered fan-back that Romeo had set up on a Duncan Phyfe dining table.... He picked her up and put her in it.... She screamed with delight.... She asked him to deliver it that night.... Stay for supper.... She'd make a Caribbean dish.... Hot and spicy.... She was a good cook....

Not as good looking as Mrs. Heywood-Wakefield.... Cross between Gunga Dinn and Mrs. Howard Hughes.... Classy all right.... Hyphenated name.... Like the classic 50's maple furniute.... Elegant.... Functional.... She'd fallen on hard times.... Her luck was going to change.... She had projects.... Needed a backer.... Romeo wasn't sure.... Married.... Kids....

Mahogany Dining-Room Suite was married.... Lived in a big expensive empty house.... Romeo wasn't sure.... Maybe it was the romance of all those things....

Same with Isitolde.... Romeo was pretty old.... His things.... Mahogany china cabinets.... End-tables.... Armoires.... A lot older.... She lit on one thing after another.... Cawing like an old parrot.... Is it old.... If it was she bought it....

Roger's Cable was a similar connection.... Upright Piano.... Piano Roll... Mechanical.... Some of them didn't want things.... Just money and sex....

Don't forget Old Lady Pisser.... Made it big.... Massive Lecturer.... On honor and shame.... There were a couple of harmless inoperative concepts for you.... Shameless Rhodesian foot-washer.... Ancient Greece still with us.... Heroes have their feet in honor and shame.... There they were.... Tootsies again.... Always tip-toeing in.... With this Continuing Education crap.... Shit hit the hustings.... Like a politician with a new conservative party.... A rock star.... ELVIS....

But Dr. Trixie took the cake.... Straight out of a Halloween horror flick.... The star.... Elvira.... What she really didn't like was Johnny's asylum book.... In THE SLIME with Romeo.... She confessed.... She hated it.... The way Johnny Boy hated doctors.... The whole thing was a smear on THE PROFESSION.... She meant doctoring.... Not tarting.... Mamma wasn't paying her way through Med School for THIS.... To be abused by weirdo losers like Johnny....

Romeo said, everyone was a LITTLE WEIRD....

*****

Romeo liked to survey the business, reminiscing about pioneers. Those Benefactors of Madkind. Thomas Alva and C.K....

While Johnny cringed and sulked. Thinking about losers. What if, after Beresinas, Napoleon said uncle!

What Romeo liked most about it was sex.

Pioneers of Alienation

Of course, he liked the money too, but it was never enough. It was trying to make it enough, and never succeeding, that spoiled the business.

It was rotten already. It had a bad name. It stank! Like the polar bears, when he was working on the North West Passage. They'd take a big bite out of a baby seal and throw it screaming onto an iceberg with the survivors of Greenpeace III, after he sank it.

It should have been the Titanic. He hoped they got it, about Nature.

He leaned over the railing, and spat. It was all a big snuff movie. Then he got bored, and built an artificial island for BP. The well exploded and caused an environmental disaster, which fixed those bears....

That's what he wanted to do to the dealers. Cause an environmental disaster on Thing Street, and start a Great Depression.

It was already GROUND ZERO. Tired, shopworn, worthless, exhausted things. How could he make a sale? Every night was GARBAGE NIGHT.

Dealers raked mounds of shit together on the curb, demanding to know HOW MUCH!

Five DOLLARS!

They'd tear off a chunk of it. Half a mouldering buffet.

Now how much!

Same price!

So they'd daub on more shit. Same price? He'd make it a package deal!

At least there was still sex. He never got enough of that either, but not getting enough sex was still more enjoyable than not getting enough money, because if you weren't getting enough sex you were at least getting some; whereas, if you weren't getting enough money you were probably saving it all.

The plump matrons and their buffets. He took them on top of Titanic 9-piece mahogany icebergs. They were seals to his polar bear, barking and flapping when he bit and moved on to the next.

He liked to say, like one of his own pain-in-the-ass clients, he was JUST BROWSING!

Isitolde didn't care. She was so old, she wanted to know how old everything else was, so she could surround herself with things that were even older than herself. That was what she wanted Romeo for, old things that made her feel young again. RELATIVELY!

His Thing Store was her Fountain of Youth.

Niagara Falls!

Romeo despised her. Called her Flipper. For the seal's limb, but mainly because he suspected she resold her purchases to that wraith down Thing Street, for a lot more money, as soon as they came to terms.

That could take a while, judging by their inexplicable absences, while Johnny conducted horrified clients through the morass of mouldering things, their uncertain and reluctant Virgil. Half were already sold, but without Romeo to tell him, he didn't know which half. Romeo, Romeo. If only he'd his NOSE! He guessed who'd bought it all, already. Isitolde!

They finally emerged from the tiny crapper, Isitolde cramming a fresh twenty in her fat budget, the difference between her rates and the price of another buffet. Her face powdered with Romeo's talc, like she'd been doing the Plantation Act backwards.

Her wraith joined them on the curb, moaning he'd lost two fanbacks and the sweetest Empire settee, when the dealer he'd sent them to for upholstering went bankrupt. He begged Romeo to come, and rescue them.

He didn't see the scowl on Romeo's face when he said, it was giving the business a bad name....

Jack paused on his velocipede, sniffing. He swore Romeo'd had something. He could smell it. He noticed the wraith, and saw Nemesis approaching, the Hydro Metre Man....

He fled, Isitolde balanced on his sissy-bars....

Sure, Romeo said. To anyone remaining, principally the wraith, and the Metre Man.

Go down, he said rattling an enermous ring of skeleton keys at the top of the trap-door. They were everyone's keys, and he owned them.

Fanbacks and settee beckoned below. Overhead the metres gleamed, like spotlights!

You, he turned suddenly to the startled wraith, can attend on your settee, but he reads by other lights than mine.

He stuffed them, wraith and Hydro Metre Man, flailing, headfirst, into the musty darkness, shutting the trap behind them.

It wasn't the business.

It was them!

Especially after a few days without any air....

Hurry! He wanted to get to the border.

Buffalo....

Niagara Falls....

*****

Thing Street Asylum

Romeo's Thing Store really was a disgrace and should have been closed decades ago. Romeo himself was a fat old lecher turned even seedier by dementia and Transforming Lives shock therapy with Doc Daskalakis down at The Compond. He sure acted like it. He smashed his guitar over a prospect's head rather than lower the price one penny. He should have gone busking with it in the streets of Toronto and mingled outside Shagburger O'Shaughnessy's with the other happy transformees who went there for the egg mcmuffin then forgot why they were there. Nothing in his Thing Store had a price because everything was totally worthless. The old pig invented one contrived of evil and greed, his animating passions now Trixie had moved on. His shit was just what everyone deserved.

*****

Why they change it I can't say.
People just liked it better that way.

*****

Citizen Hearse's great PROJECT was the TRANSFORMATION of Emile Durkheim's Twinned Tower into the NEW THING STREET. Truly a PART OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD. He'd already authorized his minions to buy up as many adjacent properties as came on the market. This meant the acquisition of various loco crack houses and galleries, including one right next to the Beastly door.

Johnny saw every Welfare Hotel transformed to a condominium, every crack-house or flop transformed to a Group Home or a Town House, as potentially one less place for him. All these transformations amounted to a considerable loss, till he finally had nowhere to live. The available places, the condos, were a kind of nowhere. They were given names that implied downtown funkiness, individuality, even eccentricity, but they looked the same all over, like postal substations circa 1960. Generically ugly and ashamed of the one thing that was real about them, their functionality. Or perhaps it was their expensiveness that they were ashamed of, the one thing they didn't share with the modern post office, which at least was efficient, and cheap. These dwellings weren't efficient, or environmentally friendly. They required retired school-teachers and hipsters to function.

Johnny could remember when, to find another room to rent, he would simply go for a walk in the evening, and call at every house that had a FOR RENT sign in the windows. There were a lot of houses. The atmosphere was quite relaxed. Landlords continued to show their rooms till late in the evening, well after dark, till finally the door would be answered by people in pjamas, pointing at their watches. Then he'd stop looking, not in any hurry. There were a lot of houses. Not any more....

The crack house next door was among the last to go, to get absorbed. It had been there a long time, long been a dive. Guests at Oak Ridge or Yucca Flats still picked up their mail, at the Beastly Crack House. Never stopped getting it. They usually didn't get it all. GST cheques and tax refunds were generally intercepted and mysteriously cashed, in other words FORGED. Johnny would hear some fresh intake at Oak Ridge mourning his loss, hear the disappointment in his voice. He'd listen, and recognize the address. Sure enough, the Beastly Crack House.

The rock and roll music used to boom so loud across the lane, tenants of Emile Durkheim House would start pounding on their neighbors' doors, to make them turn it down. They'd go into the lane, to fight it out, and realize. The music was coming from the Beastly Crack House, but none of them would go inside to pound on their doors. Only a woman on the other side ventured in one night, went all the way up to the garret, and told the occupant to TURN IT DOWN. The occupant might have been in shock, because he did.

That woman must have been brave or lucky, because a few months later the owner returned from Cuba and was assaulted by one of the guests. He subsequently declined, and died a few months later. Citizen Hearse's agent immediately made the deceased's sister an offer. It wasn't a very generous one, but it was timely because she badly wanted to get rid of the place, the front porch of which was still cordoned off by yellow Crime Scene tape.

The same families had lived for decades over the stores. The stores changed, but the families remained. Romeo's Thing Store had been Stationary, and Haberdashery. Romeo had his turn with the lady upstairs, like his predecessors, the stationer and the haberdasher. She was a lot older, but so was he, and he was in love. He said so, when he came downstairs again.

There was a very old lady who lived across the street, above an extremely old and battered coin laundry. Johnny would bring his clothes over, late at night. They'd just be finishing in the dryer when the old lady would come downstairs to close up. She'd wipe out some of the machines, which seemed futile since they were so caked with scurrilous grafitti, Johnny used to just sit and read them instead of a book. They were like neighborhood cuneiform, but easier to understand.

The old lady talked to him. She'd been born above the laundry, when it was her father's plumbing business. Her father had installed the first toilets on Thing Street, some of which were still operating today. Johnny used to see her

outside in the morning, feeding a small flock of WHITE SQUIRRELS that had become almost as much a fixture as herself.

There was a tide of speculation erasing all this, but some evenings when he walked home it seemed the tide reversed itself, there was a strong wind blowing the other way, and the wind and the tide, whatever they were, blew back the old-fashioned haunting haunted faces, happy and haggard. He would lie awake till early morning recognizing over the rumble of the Thing Car the laughter and cries of The Old Thing Street. WHITE SQUIRREL WAY would be longer and higher but, above all, quieter. It would be SILENT. Citizen Hearse would see to that.

*****

Johnny heard shouting upstairs. It was Michael. Usually so quiet and so small. Deane had warned him about his shouting. It was something he'd learn to put up with. It was blood curdling.

It got louder as Michael descended the dark-varnished stairs. Johnny was on the second floor landing when Michael passed him, shouting and beating his ears so fast his fists were blurry. Johnny followed him downstairs.

Michael halted in front if the reinforced glass door of the landlord's apartment. There was no one there. Johnny was alone, and on Michael's side of the glass. He knew what Michael wanted. He turned to him, cringing. His shiny hair accentuated his pallor. He had a good complexion, a handsome face, despite his thirst for coke and his nasty habit of slashing his cheeks with disposable razors. Johnny thought the voices drove him to it, but his behavior was also manipulative. It was probably significant that he used disposable razors, because they weren't very strong and tended to make shallow cuts. He'd look terrible for a few days, but the cuts healed quickly and all but vanished in a week.

When he cut himself somebody would give him a sedative, or two. Maybe even a couple of cigarettes. That was what he really wanted, but it wasn't worth permanently disfiguring himself. The sedatives would have turned down the voices, but not turned them off. Maybe he enjoyed them for other reasons. Maybe he was hooked. Now and then the hospital would get concerned and try to cut him off no matter how much he cut his face.

Johnny would offer to apply some ointment to the wounds. At first he'd refuse. Johnny would insist. Eventually he'd comply, and turn one cheek and then the other. After all, Johnny was the alpha male. When the cutting didn't get results, Michael would run away.

Deane said he stayed in the asylum to build up his bank account. He didn't need money while he was there, but some government money was deposited to his account anyway. When he'd built up a small sum, he'd elope. He was institutionalized. The asylum was not merely where he wanted to be (and he desperately wanted to be there). It was where he really was when he was nominally with us.

Come to think of it, his elopements only made sense in the context of the asylum. Eloping was a part of the that system. Workman wrote that it was the right of every mental patient to elope; it was a poor asylum, from which one could not elope. It went with wards, walls, and barred windows from which it was possible to sling two knotted sheets without danger of falling.

It was not a part of their system. They didn't have one. They improvised. There was no point in running away from them. It was unnecessary, and it was too easy. They were a ''non-custodial facility.'' Really just a stupid boarding home. All they had on their windows were flimsy screens. They'd not have held a baby's weight, let alone a man or a woman's. There were no wards that one could trick a foot-sore Trixie into thinking one was sleeping in, with a score of sleepers. The landlord's feet were often sore, but he only minded a few shared rooms. Michael was just doing what things did in asylums. Perhaps he figured that if he did it long enough he'd eventually be there physically as well as mentally.

They never found out what he did, though they knew where he went. He probably did nothing at all. Going home by streetcar early in the morning, Babs would see him sipping a coffee on a park bench in a seedy Hogtown neighborhood. Every Hogtown neighborhood was seedy. He could have gone anywhere to sip his coffee, although in most places he couldn't have stayed longer than fifteen minutes. The cheaper coffee shops were more lenient. There were plenty of those where he lived. They couldn't afford to alienate their clientèle. If one loitered in any of these establishments one would eventually notice that a large proportion of the customers had a tick. One would notice that someone was staring too long at his hand. Another was talking to himself. Another was writing. It was more than just a tick however. The whole city was like that. What was the use of running away?

Once a day he'd leave the House to go shopping and come back with a liter bottle of Coke and a small white plastic bag of toiletries. If Johnny saw him returning, huddled and oppressed-looking in a long coat even in the summer, he'd ask him if he wouldn't mind letting him look in the bag. He knew he was intrusive, and his worker would not have approved, but as Deane said, his worker wasn't responsible either.

Of course Johnny knew what Michael wanted. He made a barely perceptible nod, his handsome scratched and bleeding face averted, probably suppressing a smile. He was ready for his close-up now.

*****

Thing Street Asylum

Their conversations were framed by darkness like B-movies.

He'd see Deane in his light-colored clothing against a dark background. After all, he left after six.

The dark background was the night that, starting in October, got noticeably longer every day. It came a few minutes earlier every shift. It was like being on some strange ride at the Circus, after the grounds were closed to normals.

It was the Polar Express headed into winter and eternal night. The riders were Gabriel, Frederick (not Fred), Michael, Jack, Karl, Leon, Charlene, and all the other denizens of Johnny's home.

He and Deane sat together in a gondola. They didn't hold hands.

They tried to keep everyone from panicking and falling out. There wasn't much they could do except tell them, hold on. It was when you tried to get off that you got hurt.

By mid-February it never seemed to end.

The atmosphere changed when it got dark outside the big bay window. It made their crummy room like a parlor again. The bedside table-lamps on the mantle and the little round table weren't just chintzy. They were almost intimate.

Deane's voice was reassuring.

Johnny said he wanted a voice like Deane's was all the time. So smooth it seemed pasteurized. What an asset.

Deane said he was just burnt-out.

Johnny said maybe he needed a vacation.

Deane said he thought he'd go away.

Johnny said that was a bad idea. It was hard to get a job these days.

Deane stared at him for a moment. It was as if someone had broken the big bay window and the night came in with the cold to emphasize: that wasn't what he meant.

*****

Deane kept postponing Krakpotkin's transformation. Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow. He was a lifetime too late. A lifetime mommaboy. He'd get alzheimer's first.

Johnny didn't want to think about the mother, so he thought about her.

She was Lady Hearse, First Lady of Thing Street.

Johnny saw her. Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre in a veil, all in black, mourning her lost ego.

That she was dead scarcely affected his imagination. Her whole life she'd been buried, alive.

She coddled Krakpotkin like a mummy baby. Part compensation for death-in-life, bourgeois chandeliers, shit jobs. The way Hearse-Ferraris treated women!

More than a few in Thing Street Asylum, the ones who didn't immediately jump onto the TTC tracks. The BETTER WAY. To HELL!

Krakpotkin was different. Her other children were politicians, junk food magnates, pizza barons, wiener kings, developers and Mental Hell Advocates. But Krakpotkin?

Krakpotkin was an artist!

He even blacked out different. The Dadanian Way. The negative epiphany. He wanted to be a junkie, get high and stay there. His siblings, Vladimir and Ulyanov, discovered him on their way home from Opera Club. His body under a park bench, his head in a brown paper bag full of glue tubes like flattened leeches. Mindless? He was fucking HEADLESS!

The BUZZZ!

His shrink was the notorious Salvatore Malady. He had to titrate Krakpotkin's fix, slowy turn down the oral while turning up the injection that regulated his life.

It had to be a smooth transformation, or Krakpotkin would escalate. He would smoke on the dark-varnished chairs of his father's Handy Haven, scoff and wave his fag when fellow inmates, among them several prominent Clean Air Ambassadors (Butch, Bruce et al.) protested. It was a $CAMH FRESH AIR ZONE.

His father was OWNER, GOD AND CZAR. Everything was permitted, to the SCION and ARTIST! Even smoking in a FRESH AIR ZONE.

*****

Krakpotkin became Porko Daddy's responsibility about 5 years ago, shortly after his mother was thought to have passed.

Initially Krakpotkin had control of his Poem-For-The-Day, but he wouldn't take the Invega - just the sedatives and happy pills, of course - so he would go psychotic, and be found acting out (as they say) on the dark-varnished stairs. Therefore Porko was told by Mr Hearse-Ferrari to give him his Poem-For-The-Day three times a day. This was Porko's

role - giving him his Poem-For-The-Day. Krakpotkin's family brought him groceries, and Porko distributed his small allowance.

Johnny was sympathetic to Krakpotkin at the same time he found his quandary disturbing, since he knew what his trouble was and that he wasn't getting the supports he needed. Krakpotkin knew he was sympathetic, and starting coming to his door, sometimes three times a day. Johnny learned from Krakpotkin that his trouble started when he abused glue in his adolescence. He admitted that he still abused drugs, now only 30 tylenol 1s at a time. That was why he was always hitting on him for small amounts of money! So, Johnny intervened.

*****

The degenerate posers of Art School penetrated his disguises. They saw that Krakpotkin's projects were an excuse, an opportunity for substance abuse. He never wasted an opportunity, the one on whom nothing was wasted. Not airplane glue, aerosol spray paint, lacquer thinner or citrus shampoo. He liked the same things they did only more so. How good did that feel?! Very!

Decades later he brooded on their treason. He accused them of sabotaging his career. Then Poem-for-the-Day interrupted his thought processes. Since all he thought about was revenge, it was anger managment. He cherry-picked his meds so he could stay angry long enough to conceived a plan. He played Nero to Hearse-Ferrari's housing developments. He torched civilization starting with the College of Art and Design that he'd just nailed shut with his friends inside. He plucked his unstrung lyre contemplating their none-loss to art.

All for art? Fuck it! All for the BUZZZ!

How good did that feel!

*****

Johnny spoke to Porko about what was going on. He decided not to give Krakpotkin any spending money, and Johnny became Krakpotkin's pro bono shopper. A trying relationship for both of them.

Krakpotkin stole from The People's Savior in Johnny's company, and got stupid Johnny banned and himself arrested. While the cop understandingly let him off, it became apparent that The People's Savior had an extortion policy. They demanded $500 from everyone they caught, threatening to sue them in court if they didn't pay. This didn't generally work on Thing Street, where the kind of people they were apt to catch were mentally hell with nothing to extort. Johnny went to Legal Aid about it, and their opinion was that no one should pay neither Krakpotkin nor his father. No one did, and all the People's Savior did was send their claim to a credit agency. The last thing Krakpotkin cared about was his credit rating.

*****

Krakpotkin would cherry-pick his Poem-for-the-Day, then hit Thing Street and rob a dozen pharmacies. He stole Sleepeze (c), and Tylenol 1's for their codeine content. He swallowed them by the handful. His mother referred to them euphemistically as HIS pills. They mustn't EVER run out of HIS pills, or he'd escalate and transform into a SEX FIEND!

It wasn't Thing Street. It was a good neighborhood. He'd be noticed.

Those days were over. With the injection he wouldn't be able to isolate the little pink Poem-for-the-Day that kept him normal and throw it in the trash for Thorazinio to find on GARBAGE NIGHT. He could enjoy an entire day's worth of meds at once, without having to visit Porko.

For Pinky!

Krakpotkin was a GLUTTON! For the BUZZZ!

Krakpotkin got busted. In the People's Savior where Johnny'd foolishly escorted him to buy pasteurized cheese slices. Johnny realized his mistake, the moment they entered the massive Thing Street facility, and Krakpotkin vanished. He'd been too trusting.

Johnny discovered Krakpotkin on his knees under the sleep-aids, worshipping them. Johnny begged him to desist, just as the Sheikh passed them on his way to the door to cut off Krakpotkin's escape and his hand too, maybe his whole arm!

It was like he'd been kidnapped by Horrorists. They told Johnny to beat it or he'd get the TREATMENT. He protested. Krakpotkin had a mental disorder! The Sheik didn't care. The Sheik was a MENTAL HELL ADVOCATE. He told Johnny to beat it or he'd REMOVE his STIGMA, across the lifespan and around the world.

Johnny paid for his cheap cheese and FLED. Before the cop arrived the Sheik had Krakpotkin's blood type.

Johnny phoned Porko outside the store. Porko came and waited with Krakpotkin and the Sheik for the cop.

Porko told him that when the cop arrived he took Krakpotkin aside and talked to him away from Sheik Yurbooty. Johnny discoverd why. The Sheik was preparing to blackmail him. Finally the cop escorted Krapotkin out of the store in hand-cuffs. He tightened the chain.

How was his muscular memory? Remember that, next time he felt like stealing Sleepeeze (c). From The Savior.

Next time was tomorrow at the People's Guardian, the rival pharmapalace down Thing Street. Johnny should have known. Before the caper Krakpotkin asked him. Did they have security, too?!

Security was just a couple of tough broads on cash, with MOTHER tattooed on their forearms. The toughest was old-school Jamaican. She just happened to be on cash when Krakpotkin made his move. Johnny knew it really happened. Krakpotkin imitated her accent perfectly (he was good at counter-jumpers, as he fondly referred to the people he stole from). Young man! Give me back that I-TEM you just STOLE! He must have been totally nonplussed. Johnny pictured him handing it over, and moving rapidly toward the door as she ordered him to get the hell out and never come back.

Krakpotkin confessed to everything. Johnny remembered how craven he'd been, skulking around, sponging coffee. He kept repeating. He hoped it was all over. He insisted he wanted to put it behind him. If only there weren't any further retribution from The Savior or (worse!) his father, he promised he'd never do THAT again.

It was an act. Krakpotkin wondered over yet another espresso, was Johnny impressed? He though he should be. That took BALLS!

Johnny was appalled. His coming to his door six time a day, shaken and craving espresso for his jangled nerves. His remorse. It was an act! Believe him?! He would never do THAT again!

*****

Krakpotkin was always able to frustrate their efforts to control his substance abuse. Johnny must have talked to half a dozen pharmacists about not selling him Tylenol (c), but he always got it somehow. So Johnny decided to try harm reduction, which Krakpotkin was all for so long as it got him the BUZZ. This led Johnny to Trixie Zane, who led him to the good Dr Finale the Fixer. Krakpotkin appreciated Dr Finale's little fix, but when he tried to get him to get blood work done, Krakpotkin blocked him. It was no big deal, since Dr Finale indicated he would still listen to him snitch he just couldn't talk. However, Johnny found it annoying. Krakpotkin had already fired him several times, and he knew he was continuing to abuse Poem-for-the Day now it was Sleepeze.

Johnny decided that harm reduction was only marginally working or maybe that's what "reduction" really meant? He reassessed Krakpotkin's situation. Porko was continuing to distribute his Poem-For-The-Day three times a day, and this was wearing on both of them. Sometimes he would leave the Invega (c) in Krakpotkin's mail box. Krakpotkin wouldn't take it, and he would know because if Krakpotkin missed just one dose he would turn delusional and start his tortured penis talk. Johnny concluded that they could slow down his Poem-For-The-Day abuse but not stop. They might be able to solve Krakpotkin's compliance issues however with a once-a-month injection.

Deane agreed to do the injections about six months ago. He also agreed to take Krakpotkin shopping, since Johnny was fed up with it. Deane got a small honorarium $25 a time for the shopping and shots. The injections really worked!

Unfortunately a week ago Porko decided, Johnny now believed without warrant, that Deane was pocketing some of Krakpotkin's grocery money. Without even talking to Deane, Porko summarily fired him and badmouthed him to Mr Hearse-Ferrari. Johnny don't know why he did this. Apparently Porko went up to Krakpotkin's apartment after Deane had gone shopping and did not find a full week's worth of groceries. It seems he didn't consider that Deane might not have done a full week's shopping at one time, since Krakpotkin sometimes called him twice a week for groceries.

Johnny thought Porko might have fired Deane just to get him out of the picture or as a distraction, since it was a more or less open secret that Porko had been skimming from Mr Hearse-Ferrari, renting out some of Mr Hearse-Ferrari's apartments as hotel rooms and pocketing the difference. This had gone on for nearly two years, and amounted to a substantial theft. More to the point Johnny thought it indicated that while Porko was nominally in charge of Mr Hearse-Ferrari's scion he did not have Mr Hearse-Ferrari's or his scion's interests at heart. This was a very dangerous situation. When it blew up and it probably would Krakpotkin would have to make other arrangements fast! If he was not on his Poem-For-The-Day and therefore not in compliance and going in and out of psychosis it meant the only other arrangement for him is probably a Hell Home.

So the Poem-For-The-Day should continue and Krakpotkin should be encouraged to get more stable professional supports because he was at best a pawn. To put it more succinctly Porko used Krakpotkin as insurance while exploiting Krakpotkin' wealthy sire. No doubt he felt exploited too. Didn't everyone? Krakpotkin needed a cleaner, better diet, more regular Poem-For-The-Day not all that terrible sedative and anti-depressant junk which was turning him into a doped-up zombie. That it was happening with his total consent didn't make it right!

The last time he saw Krakpotkin to take him shopping he'd just ingested 400 mg of seroquel. His speech was slurred and he'd forgotten what day it was. By the time they got back from shopping he'd even forgotten about taking

the seroquel. Johnny had to show him the empty strip. Then a little later he caught him on the street panhandling his cigarettes for Sleepeze (c).

*****

Porko spied Krakpotkin on Closed Circuit TV. He was in the lobby, among the Edwardian attributes, modeling a quilted parka like a stoner Eskimo. Porko knew. He used the deep pockets to carry HIS pills.

Krakpotkin jammed the Thing Street door with ass-wipe. Porko knew he couldn't pick it out with tweezers. It turned to paste and crumbled. He'd call the locksmith, who'd charge Hearse-Ferrari thousands, for repairing The Scion's vandalism.

Off he went for his postprandial stroll to The Savior.

Moments later the slob returned, pockets bulging on the Eskimo parka. He couldn't wait to climb the dark-varnished chairs to his kitchen. He removed a bottle from his left pocket, tore off the seal with his teeth, and emptied the contents into his gaping mouth. He chewed them like candy, freckling his lips with white crumbs of codeine cake.

Porko wondered why Krakpotkin didn't vomit. So Porko did himself.

*****

He bought the pills with his food allowance. It was paltry, 60 bucks a week. When it ran out, he stole. He was always running out, hence the crime sprees and the arrests.

It was a very Dadanian habit, with all the charm and grace of the national character. It was something one's spinster auntie did, before she acquired wisdom not to say a PUSHER. It was an unmanly vice. Burroughs would have scoffed. Caesar giggled.

They worried about his physical hell. He had a bad bruise on his elbow, a lesion. Krakpotkin insisted it was just a bruise, from leaning on his elbow in bed listening to the Radio Artist on Coast to Coast (c) late at night. He liked to tune out as he tuned in, right after taking his seroquel. He was titrating reality. He feared sobriety worse than death.

This woman has been burnt.

*****

They withheld Krakpotkin's money, taking him shopping instead. Krakpotkin was indignant. He wanted control of his life. He demanded his money. Johnny knew. It was THE BUZZZ....

Johnny explained. Krakpotkin had no control, with or without any money.

Krakpotkin started to pant. I want my money.... I.... Want.... My.... Money....

Johnny continued. It was Hearse-Ferrari's money. He'd formerly given it to Krakpotkin for food.

My cheque! My CHEQUE! The Odious Pee! I never SEE it....

Johnny knew Hearse-Ferrari even embezzled The Scion's Inability Cheque. His Feckless Funds. He declared Johnny's old pad Ground Zero Two and wrote it off as uninhabitable. Then he installed Krakpotkin, and invested the rent portion of his cheque in Beijing sweat-shops manufacturing native head dresses out of toxic materials.

Krakpotkin never gave up. He begged Johnny to lend him three dollars, or to buy him vanilla extract because it had trace amounts of alcohol. He even begged lens wipes. He'd take a couple back to his bower, drape them over his face like Alapaloozah under the hot towel, and inhale the fumes as they evaporated. He didn't get a BUZZZ. Just a little static....

The Radio Artist with laryngitis....

Johnny wouldn't give him any money, so Krakpotkin found other ways to get a BUZZZ. He begged Porko for more fags, while reducing his consumption. Johnny spotted cartons in Krakpotkin's parlor, but when he asked him for a pack Krakpotkin solemnly turned him down. He was panhandling.

Then he went to Butch, the plagiarism man. Butch was never too busy to share a joint in his apartment that stank like Mr. PEEPEE....

*****

Johnny knew Krakpotkin was absolutely determined to get a BUZZZ. The problem with the Tylenol 1s was the acetaminophen and the damage it did to his liver. Johnny asked him how he'd feel about METHADONE. Krakpotkin was for it, if it gave him the BUZZZ.

Johnny said he'd ask Trixie. He emailed her in her condo at Thing and Ozztown. She referred him (she was good at referrals). To Dr Finale! The Junkie Albert Schweitzer!

Thing Street Asylum

Dr Finale's Lab was over the oldest drug store on Thing Street. The door was nondescript, neo-colonial. Beside it was his shingle. He kept odd hours. He was the FIX DOCTOR. When nobody else was available, he was there.

Johnny got the junkies' answering service. Normal answering services recorded the message and thanked you for calling. This one thanked Johnny for being such a good friend, but warned him NOT to leave a message, because every message was a CRY for HELP, and forwarded directly to DOCTOR FINALE to FIX IT.

Every message was a JUNKIE SOS.

*****

Finale the Fixer was Dr Benway in a Jalna novel. Studiously over-dressed. Johnny escorted Krakpotkin into his office above the ancient pharmacy. He noted the hardood floor (original), and the antiques. The oak chairs could have come from a waiting room in the 30s. There was a sofa against one wall. There were old radios on small end-tables. There was even an old Hammond Organ. They had music appreciation night for junkies.

Dr Finale had given them a morning appointment, which for him meant 2 A.M. They were the only guests. His secretary met them and handed them some forms to fill out. She beamed like a Travel Agent. She was....

Johnny sat with Krakpotkin at one of the end-tables and wrote down Krakpotkin's answers to the questions he asked him from the clip-board. Krakpotkin was co-operative. He wanted the BUZZZ and maybe to get rid of his acetominophen habit too.

While Johnny interviewed Krakpotkin the regular clients began to arrive. Johnny observed the routine. The Good Dr Finale emerged from time to time from his inner sanctum. It was a photo-shoot at a fashion show but it was only to get a renewal after he'd checked their urine. He nodded in their direction and assured them he'd see them after he'd conducted some business. He was very efficient.

Deane was going to transform him. He'd get him a cleaner, hot meals delivered to his door, maybe even a slave job down at the loco Godwill.

He'd become an IT SPECIALIST!

*****

Getting off was escapism. Who knew what into? It might take billions of years for the polar express to arrive at that station somewhere north of Archangel. North of Finland. But it would. Global warming would only be a memory growing cold.

Getting off was the surest way to arrive ahead of schedule. The station master would be a skeleton made of ashes and glue. He'd speak Russian.

Deane always wanted to learn another language. He'll offer Deane one of his daughters, and a Lucky Strike.

*****

Deane's death was something that happened in the movies happening to Johnny. It took Death fifty years to catch up. A few more years and Johnny might have escaped by dying himself. He tripped and stumbled over Ma's body. He got up again right away; otherwise, Death would have caught him then for sure. Instead it barely affected his stride.

Death is everywhere. Death comes out of the house, stands leering beside Johnny and Gabriel, and leans on the railing. Death has Deane's gauntness without his pain. Deane's gauntness was Death's to begin with. The ashes in the can have more substance than Deane has now.

Death is no usurper. Death is a restored monarch re-establishing his reign. Deane was his protector but he wasn't his successor. Death settled that affair of state.

Death is next in line at the No Frills. Death waits behind the cash with his bony hand on the till where anyone can see it if he will. He can't steal what's his by reversion. He wouldn't bother.

Death is not very frilly but very obsequious. The cashier weeps to see Johnny bearing the purple bin. Death is in the no-name chicken strips and the white breast-meat nuggets. On every pack of Lucky Strikes a pale Death's Head preempts the Surgeon General's warning.

Johnny's clothes are stained with bleach and covered with ashes where Deane's bony fingers have touched them. Holes appear in the shirt Deane gave him and melt where he gazed with eyes of flame. Look pretty for the picture, Connie.

Death stars in Pink Flamingos and sits stoned in the audience with Deane and his lesbian girl friends from his job at the women's shelter. Death laughs at everything. There are no serious parts.

Death walks on the green grass in daylight and sleeps in the ground. Death holds everything together. Death is bad continuity. Death is the pink flamingos and the newspaper blowing against their iron stilts during the credits.

Death is melodrama and real life. Death is the skeleton in the gallery that doesn't scare us any more. Death makes us wonder what it's doing here. Death makes us wonder what we are.

*****

The jokes. Real stinkers. He was going to put a spot in the middle of his forehead and hang a potato from his crotch and become a dick-tater.

Deane didn't have many clothes and some of his favorite clothing, like his Leafs shirt, got ruined with bleach. They traded shirts. Deane gave Johnny a black sports shirt. He noticed right away how nice it smelled. Deane said he washed it in Tide. He asked Johnny if he knew why. He said (with a lisp) because it was cold out tide.

One night a few weeks before Christmas (the last one) they were standing on the porch after supper and Deane said he couldn't drive his car over the curb without damaging the bumper.

He said he couldn't get it up, and winked at Johnny. But it was worth a try, he said as he handed him the cell-phone. Hold this anyway, he added.

As opposed to his cock, he meant.

*****

On Friday afternoon Deane told him that he'd shaved off his pubic hair. He didn't know why. He was seeing himself laid out at the morgue. He wanted to be clean.

Johnny was sitting on a battered park bench at the beginning of that green strip at the end of Thing Street overlooking the lake. There weren't any houses on this side of the street. When Ma was alive he used to go ''home'' to Maypole City by train. He would look up from the tracks below and see the big houses and wonder what they were like. Now he knew. He looked down and didn't wonder anything at all about the train and where it was going. He knew that too. He could see the outdoor tennis courts of some Hogtown club. They were covered with tents. They look stuffed.

The traffic reminded him of Deane and Ma and his last visits to them. He was angry with Ma because after bringing her a computer all the way from Hogtown she took her eighty-year-old boyfriend's advice that she couldn't use it. Too blind. Before he stormed out she asked me if there were anything he wanted. He said the old fart's obituary. She slapped his face. He couldn't grieve for her the way he was grieving for Deane.

*****

Serge drove him in to see Deane at the funeral home in Ossington. Along the lakeshore, in his Lada. Deane drove home that way every night.

The Hardener Distressway....

On either side a wasteland of high-rise condos and cheap townhouses. The funeral home was a converted fire hall off an exit ramp at the town line. It was in the middle of nowhere. There were a lot of cars in the lot.

They knew that Deane had shot himself. They knew about his ''little'' gun, a Luger given to him by his father-in-law. They assumed that he had shot himself in the head, and that it would therefore be a closed casket. An obsequious flunky escorted them into a darkened room where they were playing some sort of mellow-jazzy elevator music and there were a lot of women, his in-laws, hovering about in sequined evening gowns.

It was grotesque, but the only thing he really noticed, in a beam of light at the end of the room, was Deane's face. It was an open casket after all.

Serge walked a few paces towards it, then recoiled. He'd seen enough. He was ready to go. Johnny walked right up to the casket. There was a faint white disk in the middle of Deane's brow. It must have been the bullet hole. The back of his head had been blown off.

Johnny had never seen him asleep, but his eyelids looked unnaturally flat and sunken. His eyes had probably been blown out too. His lips were bloodless, thin and tight as if he were still experiencing pain.

*****

Deane said he'd always wanted to be an actor. He was a good one. Johnny really didn't know him very well.

*****

He was hard.

Thing Street Asylum

*****

A rat-like scurrying along the dusky boulevard.... A woman who resembled an especially untidy bag-lady only a bit too young.... A man with a foppish hair-cut under an enormous sombrero.... They could only be.... Drs. Trixie and Praetorius....

It was.... Garbage Night!

Every now and then one of the noisome pair farted joyously at the sudden discovery of an especially appetizing piece of S.H.I.T....

A linoleum-topped tavern-table with an hilariously ugly matching base.... An old radio with the guts spilling out just like one of their patients.... It was D.E.A.D. too.... A heavy iron typewriter serviced by the Unification Typewriter Co. of Beijing.... The keys rusted together into a massive metal fist....

A palsied limb emerged from the offal like Excalibur's arm and started brazenly groping for the same trash.... Praetorius shrieked excitedly as Trixie flailed wildly at the shadows....

Again and again. And again....

Ugh, Ug-g-g-h-h-h said the shadows....

The dirty duo loaded their heaving van with coveted S.H.I.T.... They were secretly gratified that somebody wanted it even more than themselves....

Trixie cackled gleefully and Praetorius pealed rubber as he drove their van back and forth across the madly screaming form....

Some kinda W.E.I.R.D.O., Trixie observed as the wallowing van pulled away....

He needs MEDICAL ATTENTION....

Right on cue, a service-vehicle with an enormous GARBAGE sign pulled up on the sidewalk, but instead of the usual goons a dapper figure in corduroy and tweed stepped gingerly from the cab. He wore patent leather Dix, and a pencil-thin moustache, like John Waters, or Tennessee Williams....

Sorry to do this to you, JOHNNY!

It was Marek Finkelburgher....

Please sir, sign this waiver....

I, I d-don't kn-now, he stammered. It looked distinctly like a contract, exclusive rights for Thing Street Asylum....

Otherwise, we can't CURE you....

How like Finkelburgher, to offer him a quill pen. He dipped it into the little pool of his own blood, coagulating on the curb....

He signed.

They hopped into the idling garbage truck, and sped off down Thing Street, splitting their guts, belly-laughing....

With painful slowness Johnny Boy pulled himself erect, brushing off leaves and remnants of old Shagburghers that still adhered to his clothing, warm with bloody vomit....

He saw stars....

He told him he'd find him....

Next time they'd go to Niagara Falls....

*****

These texts depict the North American birth of the clinic, not the austere Foucauldian clinic of the 19th-century, but the modern Thing Street facility, with advanced power to generate, however crudely, the knowledge that not only enhances its power but also disseminates it.

Of this phenomenon it is appropriate to ask, as Foucault does of the 18th-century clinic, whether one can rightfully transform into an object of clinical observation a patient whose poverty has compelled him to seek assistance (Michel Foucault, The Birth of the Clinic: An Archeology of Medical Perception, Trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1973), 83), or whether it is not a tacit form of violence ... upon a sick body that demands to be comforted, not displayed (84).

The latter question dogs not only C.K. Sharke's vociferations in the name of the Asylum on behalf of the clinic, but also the rhetoric of his predecessors, George Hamilton Park, Daniel Clark, and above all, Joseph Workman, Sharke's mentor as well as predecessor. In their various arguments, in pamphlets, articles, and annual reports these doctors continually display the bodies of the sick, to no good effect.

Ironically, instead of the dense and wealthy population of a metropolitan city, which the original commissioners anticipated in the 1840s would mean a steady supply of students, an ever-growing population of urban poor supply it with variously depicted plagues of masturbators, monomaniacs, erotomaniacs, paretics, degenerates, schizophrenics, defective immigrants, low to high-grade morons, and feeble-minded women. The doctors play fast and loose not only with these diseases but also with the poor who seem to be especially vulnerable to them, and whose diseases it is

difficult if not impossible to distinguish from poverty. The diseases vary with the role of the Asylum in professional imagination, but their epidemic and endemic character remains constant.

*****

Johnny watched the $CAMH Engage Breakthrough Challenge videos. He found it hard to stay awake, they were so LAME!

They were masturbatory..

Romani "Miserable" Mizrahi wanted to prevent schizophrenia. Bully! If you wore sunglasses all day and hated crowds, YOU were AT RISK!

HE was AT RISK!

What DEGENERATE wasn't?!

Sean "The" Kidd eyed high-rise apartment buildings lustfully, estimating the number of schizophrenic prospects (20 just in the buildings he could see!). Sean should have told Signor Citizen Hearse-Ferrari. He would have been interested to know. It was his building!

"The" Kidd noted the prevalence of bad housekeeping and bad hygiene among THEM. Maybe Johnny's landlord should have talked to SEAN – because they were all slobs at Emile Durkheim House - so maybe they were all schizophrenic too (as opposed to 99% - Johnny's estimation).

It seemed to Johnny there was nothing Sean "The Kidd" had to offer that a good Personal Support Worker couldn't have done just as well or better - and for a lot less than The Kidd's "socially entrepreneurial" $110,000 plus salary. Well, the acronym was new - but as a shtick for a $200,000,000 fundraiser - it wasn't LAME; it was PATHETIC.

Actually, Sean should have talked to Miserable Mizrahi, since BAD HOUSEKEEPING was obviously another indication, like sunglasses and aversion to crowds. Eureka!

Annother DEGENRATE!

It was an EPIDEMIC! The PLAGUE!

Farcical Farzan wanted to ZAP Johnny out of his depression, which she attributed to clogged pathways - rather like Thing Street at any hour of the day.

That made him laugh. A real ZAPPER!

A blinding flash and then....

Blackout!

A waste of hydro....

Hilarious....

It was the national artform. Dadlit Shit! A Rube Goldberge EPIPHANY. Electrified.... POEMFORTHEDAY!

It was.... ZONCOLITE!

*****

It was cops and robbers. Johnny met Krakpotkin at Thing and Handout, and knew he was headed to the Dung Pharma Palace.

Could he come along?

Krakpotkin was cagey. He wanted to know, what for?

Company, Johnny said. Who else on Thing Street, in all Porkdale, knew about Nietzsche's Myth of Eternal Return.

Krakpotkin said, he didn't want any.

Johnny said he did.

They'd already passed the Vape Hustler Emporium on the corner. They were nearly there.

I don't think I like this, Krakpotkin said.

Johnny said nothing.

Krakpotkin asked what he was going to do.

Johnny said nothing. It was HARM REDUCTION.

In front of the Dung Pharma Palace, he asked Johnny if he was coming in.

Johnny said, no thanks. Meanwhile he'd spotted the Asian pharmacist on cash. He waved to him as the door closed behind Krakpotkin and he ordered his pills. The pharmacist beckoned to him, to enter.

I thought you weren't going to sell to him, Johnny said.

He said Krakpotkin kept promising him. Each time was the last time.

That was why they called his methadone doctor FINALE. He had a lot of last times.

The pharmacist didn't repeat his spiel about HARM REDUCTION. Instead he asked Johnny if he wanted him to kick him out.

Certainly, he said.

Krakpotkin said he just wanted to be by himself. Johnny figured that was IMPOSSIBLE on THING STREET. Possibly the only thing.

Krakpotkin loitered on the lintel under the low facade of a crummy haberdasher's. Johnny knew he would likely go to the other drug store beside the No Frillies. He wanted to give that pharmacist a copy of Krakpotkin's portrait, in which he resembled Young Edison playing the Theremin (if he'd been a JUNKIE with an EATING DISORDER and a THEREMIN) but The Benefactor of Mad Kind had given his last mugshot to the pharmacist on Dung and there wasn't time for Mr Kodak. C.K. Sharke's Defective Immigrants were already lining up around the block for passport photos.

Johnny proceeded directly to the little hole-in-the-wall beside the huge grocery store where it always felt like Check Day.

He entered just ahead of Krakpotkin who waved his arms at him in a characteristic gesture of disgust, like he was recreating the theme from Spellbound.

Ecce homo, he said. The pharmacist was a stocky East Indian man at a desk behind a partition in the back of the store. For that reason, and because frustrated posers were always coming to him with script, he reminded Johnny of an Impresario.

I've seen him, he said. You should have been a Mountie.

*****

Lumpen Lunsky wanted to screen him for cancer.

It was almost as big a moneymaker as SCHIZOPHRENIA....

Bully!

Albert "Alapaloser" Wong was working with the Structural Genomics Gambling Consortium - to CURE SCHIZOPHRENIA by rolling the DNA dice.

Johnny knew better.

It was all about ZONCOLITE!

If he didn't CURE SCHIZOPHRENIA something else was bound to show up. Surprise, surprise!

He still got to keep the $500 donation....

SO went the CLOWNSHOW!

VOTE for ONE of THESE? For 2 hundred million dollars - or for 2 cents - he'd sooner abstain!

DON'T VOTEENGAGE! ABSTAIN!

*****

Client Perspectives at the Grindhouse* Casino?! The "Star Treatment"?! It was a Fascist Hellcare Fairy Photo Play. (*Not to be confused with the Parkdale Community Hell Centre PCHC Toronto - a wholly other - if at times parallel - universe....)

*****

Johnny went to the Grindhouse on THING STREET to get an Academy Award. He hadn't been to one in fifty years, and he'd quit his last bit-part over acute anxiety.

He kept fluffling his lines....

He needed a career tonic, cloacal and transformative. All the crazies cried for it. It was fermented in the Basement Studios of the Ministry of Stealth and Despair, and dispensed by a coterie of medical bureaucrats, charlatans with Pork U Diplomas and butch, military names like Medical Production Unit that sounded like they'd all been lost till now filming the Korean War or WWI, because they wore those crazy helmets, German ones with spikes on which they impaled every lunatic bit-player's rejected bid for STARDOM....

Pioneers of Alienation

The senior wonks could all be readily identified by their thicker, meatier helmet wads. The thicker the wad, the bigger the wonk....

They loved nothing better than typing rejection memoranda in heavy blackletter. COMRADE: Having carefully scrutinized every detail of your nauseating repertory, words fail us. We simply cannot adequately express how deeply we revile everything about you, but especially your disgusting perverted desires and your perfect indifference toward the objects of the same, manifested by total uninhibited antisocial indecency not to mention bad hygiene and an ineluctable air of dirty feet and ass about you. Nonetheless, after a wasted lifetime of inveterate insolvency, schizoid withdrawal, and occupational wandering, you're SWELL!

Five years later at the GRINDHOUSE, he still hadn't seen a MOGHUL (with hospital privileges)....

For his first audition Johnny was interrogated by an amateur film-buff in a cocktail dress. She didn't know what she was doing. She didn't know she didn't know.

The audition became an interrogation once he identified as GAY. The student became obsessed about his sex life - he didn't have one!

When Johnny wondered why, the student implied that dangerous promiscuity went with the [gay] POPULATION. Johnny thought it went with chicks in cocktail dresses PLAYING DIRECTOR.

He said he hadn't FUCKED ANY STARS, not EVER! - to his intense chagrin, at times. Maybe a hand-job, or two back in the 80s.... Last century.... Not Fatty Arbuckle.... Flubber....

He wondered how, when nobody even knew who was gay or not, anyone could make generalizations. They weren't EVIDENCE BASED.. They weren't even POST MODERN!

His MEDICAL HOSTESS didn't understand. Stricken with aporia, she sent him for blood-work. Out on the STREET, when he looked at the sheaf of forms she'd shoved into his hand, he saw the AIDS TEST. She'd checked sex with men - LIAR! Or - more likely - she thought he was.

Fortunately the moonlighting ticket-taker he bitched to at the wicket in the lobby behind the barbed wire and bomb-proof glass of the GRINDHOUSE was a worse flamer than himself, so was sympathetic - and looking for a part. He referred Johnny's complaint to the Manager - who immediately phoned him back to explain that they NEVER/EVER automatically screened FAGGOTS for AIDS - although they'd LOVE to SCREEN EVERYBODY, it would make the world so much SAFER, after it was typecast.

She gave Johnny a new producer. Johnny asked if he was an experienced hand. She burst into uncontrollable GUFFAWS of cruel and boozy LAUGHTER.

The new producer considerately offered to show Johnny how to use a safe. He also offered to clean his ears, two Educational Videos curiously associated in his mind.

He bungled the ear-cleaning movie, so Johnny never took him up on his second offer. Then he lectured Johnny on not giving up even if he was an elderly pauper fag living on Welfare in Porkdale - he had to fight on! He had a degree! He could still get TENURE! Be a STAR!

Johnny GAVE UP on PRODUCERS, and decided to try a DIRECTOR for a change. He chose TRIXIE B. CAVELL. She was a Big Director at Yukka Flats Soup Kitchen and Poverty Row Entertainment Centre.

Her favorite question was, hey! you suicidal or what? Hoping he'd answer in the affirmative so she could call the pigs. She always figured Johnny was a danger to himself and others. He could off himself any time he wanted, the sooner the better. It was the others she cared about. Her significant other, that is. Her fine fat foxy self.

TRIXIE had a relationship with the cops. Eleven Division and not one at a time. Hogtown's Finest - in Parade Formation. She wanted a role model for Little Sebastian. He was almost as persnickety as herself. The anxious type. He learned it from her, and all the quack fads she practiced that didn't work. Yoga and Mindfulness. Everything the East gave up on after getting screwed out of it by the West. She gave it a whirl....

Johnny pictured her bouncing up and down in the lap of Hogtown's finest. Sebastian in footies sneaking out of his crib with the pretty cop-car mobiles clutching his first erector set padding over to door.... The movement.... The colour.... The thrashing hairy hooves of the sweating stallions.... The mounted Sergeants.... His primal scene....

It was a different Daddy every night, but the routine never varied and wondering if he'd ever see the same one twice gave him ADHD.

Insight gave Little Sebastian Anxiety Disorder, but that was no excuse for poor benighted MOTHER.

Johnny himself suffered from acute anxiety. Worse after his boyfriend at Miscegenation House shot his dick off with his in-law's Lugar. He had the usual symptoms of trauma. Johnny's were somewhat less severe: nausea and vomiting, pissing and shitting before appointments, feeling like he wanted to flee but his legs were frozen, etc. He'd already referred several clients to TRIXIE for the Star Treatment. Maybe she could turn the trick for HIM, too.

Johnny got on - the first time - when TRIXIE and LITTLE SEBASTIAN were vacationing with the Medical Film Colony of FIRE ISLAND. Johnny got off when she was around. It figured.

Johnny was pissed. He needed the tonic. He wanted the transformation. At the GRINDHOUSE, TRIXIE's first reaction was that insulting, formulaic question: You suicidal, or WHAT?!

No, he wanted to say. DESPERATE....

Because he knew, especially after the trauma of his boyfriend at MISCEGENATION HOUSE - that few suicides announced themselves, except the occasional imposter who really just wanted a lift to SATAN HOUSE, so the question was basically intended to make him submit to humiliation either by Trixie or by The Hayes Office. If he submitted to

humiliation by letting her insult his intelligence and affirm her bullshit therapeutic CODE - he didn't NEED Will Hayes. He was already DISNEY.

Of course Johnny knew. She didn't give a fuck. Whenever Johnny intimated how shitty he felt, she started raving about her MISE EN SCENE. Like she thought she was an auteur. Johnny knew. She meant it wasn't her role to actually do anything, so why was he bothering her with his fucking problems? Why didn't he just go to McDonalds and talk to the staff? They were paid hourly and they weren't unionized so they'd be polite. When there was nothing for her to do, then she was there for him all right. Then she really shone....

What a shame, she said in her caring voice (i.e., condescending). The one she employed not very successfully to disguise her total lack of empathy. So his Box Office was about to be halved? Big deal.

But Johnny knew. What was half of nothing? She was on the so-called Chitlin' Circuit making over a hundred thou with Leni and Ida and the other Grindhouse Gals. They were always late for their appointments, they took too many sick-days, and they guzzled beer and smoked dope on the island whenever they thought no one was looking, but they were AUTEURS. The giant slogans plastered over the phillies flaming down Peacock Alley proclaimed everyone counted. Johnny knew. Nobody did - least of all himself.

So TRIXIE B. CAVELL typed a synopsis, the usual litany of stress and trauma, exactly as lived: nausea, vomitting, panic, prostration, etc., imploring the mandarins of Stealth and Despair to please stop doping long enough to read it because this fag was beginning to annoy her pissing and shitting all over her office terrified he was going to have to live in one of their Model Suites, the top bunk over another faggot even older and with a worse case of gas and not just by the way, while they were at it, would one of them PLEASE remember to pick up another case of that WONDERFUL Dom Perinjon like they brought last weekend when they all stripped naked at $CAMH UnMasked and screwed on the dissecting table watching client snuff movies to the sound of secretly recorded deviant case histories.

That should do the trick.

Unfortunately the Medical Production Unit had just got in an especially potent crack shipment giving them better things to do than review Johnny's Oscar Nomination, but they remembered the champagne.

She faxed the screenplay. She asked Johnny to sign the diet form, and joked that with his ACTRA card he shouldn't have forgotten THAT.

After he left Johnny noticed that a rather more important form, another of the documents she'd faxed, also hadn't been signed. She'd totally missed it! The ABATTOIR was already in lock-down mode, but an usher readmitted him. A big blond assistant-producer tackled him at the reception desk, and commanded him to WAIT RIGHT THERE while she got TRIXIE. He could tell. Snow White wanted to call the cops. They ALL did!

TRIXIE B. CAVELL set up an appointment with Metro Goldwyn at the GRINDHOUSE, a big Studio Boss. She described him in glowing terms. He was a lovely man, a dear man. She sounded just like Valerie Pringle describing David Goldbloom. Johnny assumed they were dating. He didn't want to see the kids. What if BRAIN DISEASE really was hereditary?

Then TRIXIE and Johnny got into a totally pointless argument about popular producers - which is what he considered all the so-called auteurs at the GRINDHOUSE really were - meaning, they didn't really give a FUCK about individuals at all, certainly not about Johnny, they merely processed an abstract population for the CIRCUIT - and made a lot of money doing so, many of them well over a $100,000 - working for pauper fuck-ups like Johnny? Like HELL they were!

However, TRIXIE B. CAVELL was in a hurry, because she had to do another screening in just a few minutes. She was dressed like Maila Nurmi for FRIGHT NIGHT. A long slinky black thing made out of shark skin with tentacles dangling from the sleeves. Obviously not for - THE CLIENTS - most of whom associated such drag with zombies and émigré crack-whores.

Screenings were little medical set-pieces they put on at the GRINDHOUSE for the benefit of Film School students. There was an ear-cleaning number at the end of which TRIXIE B. CAVELL exclaimed VOILA while brandishing a chamber pot full of little wax turds that were supposed to have been flushed out of a happy client's ears.

I can HEAR now!

There was even one about HOW TO WEAR A SAFE, which might have been awkward for TRIXIE, but fortunately Johnny never saw it. They demonstrated nothing that ever really happened anyway.

Meanwhile Johnny was worrying that he'd be typecast with schizophrenia. Well, TRIXIE said, in her most unctuous auteur voice, at least you'll get your (goddamned) OSCAR!

She grabbed his arm and stabbed him with her prick. So your Box Office is about to be halved?! Big DEAL! Ha ha ha.

Johnny knew that if anybody'd threatened to dock her receipts by so much as 2% she'd have squealed like a stuck SOW. He noticed she was speaking through clenched teeth. It was a SIGN! That what she was saying was ABSOLUTELY TRUE! It also meant she was having difficulty with her role, because HE was SO STUPID. She would have been the Trixie Cavell of Yucca Flats by now, had it not been for his STUPIDITY making her want to muzzle thump him with her AK47. Why couldn't he see it? She was HERE for him, but THE SWAMI was THERE for him. THERAPY would HELP. He knew her SWAMI was useless and she was passing the FUCK. She ground her teeth like a

rusty Volvo. It worked like MAGIC, on the crack-heads at Yucca Flats. Johnny was a Lada.... In which case Christianity was a Mazda Dealership and ISIS a Toyota....

Finally TRIXIE B. CAVELL set up an audition with Metro Goldwyn. She met Johnny again when he was waiting in the lobby. She was on her way to Yucca Flats, for the premier of STEALTH & DESPAIR. Break a leg, she said. Break BOTH legs....

Metro Goldwyn was a well-dressed Jewish man, very cheerful, like an affable studio boss in the 30s - the heyday of studio bosses. He was definitely a player. Johnny'd already looked him up in Billboard. He hung out with other Moguls, like Fred Lowly, the man who broke Olivieri for the PHARMAFASCISTS.

It took Metro Goldwyn 15 minutes to cast him as a schizophrenic - paranoid sub-type to be precise. Johnny was somewhat disappointed. He'd been hoping for something interesting and glamorous - like one of the paraphillias - but, while Metro had noted the foot-fucking, shit eating and dirty panty sniffing, they weren't the main event. Stealth and Despair didn't recognize rapists when they were sisters. The Code didn't allow it. Naturally Johnny wondered when the director's cut would be ready, compared to which his doctorate was but a trifle, a b-movie trailer, but Metro assured him - he would have the shooting script (progress notes).

Johnny said it wasn't exactly film noir. Maybe French New Wave? They might have liked it in Pamona, but Stealth and Despair insisted on an NC-17 or it was a Lost Weekend, a waste of champagne....

It was like just Trixie B. Cavell - asking him was he OK with it? Right after admitting she'd spied on him with The SWAMI! He thought of Mussolini and Clara Petacci....

He was OK with it.....

It was a WRAP!

*****

In Observations on Insanity,[52] (See the Canada Medical Journal 1 (1864-65), 401-12) Workman scoffed that if masturbation were regarded per se, as an efficient cause, he dreaded to think how multitudinous would be the number of lunatics in America (406).

*****

Johnny didn't HATE DOCTORS....

*****

Deane was high-fiving clients outside the pharmacy. He'd learned it, from the blacks.

He looked like Leisure Suit Larry, running for Mayor. Of Thing Street....

His notion of casual dress was pure 40s. He wasn't young, but he looked young. That's what delusional living did for you. He thought young!

His shorts were made for F. Scott Fitzgerald, though some stains looked fresh. He wore his polo shirt open, exposing the gray hair sprouting on his breast-bone. Like a bush!

Johnny wanted to FUCK him. He was his type. Crazy, and butch, like the old-fashioned keepers whose photos decoratd Thing Street's cinder-block corridors.

So he humored him. He solicited him where he waited, outside the pharmacy. Want to diagnose me, right on Thing Street? Sort of a free sample.

He said he could diagnose anyone, but not without knowing them.

Well, Johnny said, let's go for a walk and get acquainted.

Maybe, he said, looking nervously over his shoulder, if my manager isn't watching.

He knew he didn't have one. He didn't even have a job. So they strolled to the McDonald's, at the end of the Thing Street.

Johnny thought he was going to interview him, but found himself asking all the questions. He said he was at once spendthrift and needy, so his wife kept him on an allowance. He confessed he was still wanted by the police, for stealing credit cards. He also had a touch of OCD. He liked to arrange the stolen credit cards in little piles on his desk, according to color and the size of the debt he'd run up. He asked him if he knew where he could get any good dope.

Johnny didn't believe that guff about marriage. He figured he was just saying that, because he was a fag. But he was astonished by how much everything else exactly fitted his description of the perfect man: the needy white male, with Affliction issues and a touch of OCD. No needy white male was without!

[52] See the Canada Medical Journal 1 (1864-65), 401-12,

He said he had to continue, through the park. It was his turn to make supper. Johnny suspected it always was, or (more likely) there wasn't any supper, just a park bench and whatever he could scrounge.

He thought he should say something, so he told him. I'm a stupid fag, he said. He didn't say, for being attracted to guys like you.

He seemed to wince at the term, and held his hand against his forehead to see him better against the sun. He saw him perfectly then. All the wear and tear of years of standing outside that pharmacy, in all kinds of weather, rain or shine, seemed to slough away and he looked thirty. Even the hair on his breast bone changed color. It was black and bushy again. He really was his type. A fag, but not stupid.

My brother is homosexual, he said.

By then they were on to each other. They knew. Just as he didn't have a wife, or supper, or even a home for that matter, he didn't have that kind of brother. Johnny had a supper to look forward to, and a home. He was needy and spendthrift, and obsessive. For him! He was the brother, or maybe they were. Brothers!

Nobody said anything. He went into the park to lie down, and Johnny went home. To supper. The next day he wasn't in front of the pharmacy, but one of the blacks handed him a prescription for methadone. His farewell note.

He watched for him anyway. Maybe he'd been picked up, for impersonating a nurse. He missed him. His brother!

******

Every MAD MAN
deserves a DREAM NURSE....

Deserves a MENTAL
NURSE....

MALE ONES -
they're the BEST....

IRISH - MALE -
MENTAL - NURSES....
BLUEST EYES
and BIGGEST FEET....
FUCKING CRAZY - and a
HUGE COCK!

Works for $CAMH
STATE CAPITALISTS....
Their #1 PSYCHOTROPIC
DRUG RUNNER....
He's still so UNDER
APPRECIATED....

Those BIG FEET
really GO but
his BIG COCK PEDALS
Johnny's ASS a LOT HARDER!

The 2 THINGS he's GOOD FOR
DRINKING BEER & FUCKING....
That silvery TUFT on his
BREAST-BONE - gives him a FIERCE ERECTION....
Under the POLO © trademark, his nipple
stands up for the QUEEN....
Last time he REMOVED his
SHOES - he nearly CAME....

Maybe this time I'll get him to
REMOVE HIS SOCKS.....
With the HOT WEATHER, he'll be
working on his SHIRT....
But there's so MUCH you can TELL
about a NURSE by his FEET....

Pioneers of Alienation

Running MEDS
for ELI LILLY and YOU....
and the FUCKING
STATE CAPITALSTS....
At their NONE OF IT"S
KIND Hospital.....
In NEW STIGMALAND
on THING STREET....
Or the INSTITUTE named
after their PIONEERING NAZI
IDIOT -
C.K. SHARKE....

*****

$CAMH RN's wellworn shoes. They needed some new RNs because this one was nearly wornout but $CAMH CEO Trixie Zane & Society Shrink Praetorius spent all the money on antique gadgets propaganda fanbacks and themselves.

Bad drugs.... Worse hardware....

Now after raising hundreds of millions they said they couldn't afford rent. So they weren't merely greedy they were incompetent! they were STUPID! But there was always time - and money?! - for Pan Am Games and Photo Ops and - of course - the GRAND OPENING!

*****

Johnny knew $CAMH was ROTTEN. They adhered to a strictly medical model of so-called mental illness to the exclusion of MAD people, and most mentally ill people, who deluded themselves they'd GET OVER IT when NO ONE EVER GOT OVER ANYTHING LEAST OF ALL MADNESS....

Concentrating on the MEDICAL MODEL, invoking some yet-to-be-discovered CURE, helped justify research and SELLING DRUGS, making $CAMH's NONE OF IT'S KIND HOSPITAL the biggest DRUG STORE of the biggest PUSHER on THING STREET.

DEANE resembled a boy-scout who'd just discovered COCAINE. Clean-cut, freshly wasted. His taste ran to short-shorts and bright Hawaiian shirts unbuttoned over tanned, hairy shoulders. Johnny's type. He was getting a beer gut, and he was going bald.

He was a Medical Model Human Delivery System....

He rode his kick-ass bike on $CAMH drug-runs to patients all over Thing Street, including Butch. Junkies had it all....

Johnny often met him at the end of his drug run, when he stopped to remove his bike helmet and adjust his few remaining head hairs in the window of Asylum Donuts. DEANE worked upstairs. He would catch Johnny studying his reflection as he smiled at himself. He'd smile back, at BOTH of them.

He stopped Johnny when he was postering on THING STREET. It was PIZZA NITE. DEANE was with a client. The client would have come between them, as LYTTON STRACHEY used to say, but she wanted a SLICE. DEANE ditched her, and accompanied Johnny down THING STREET, to the TWIN TOWERS.

They talked. DEANE repeated the sayings of GREAT PRAETORIUS, former CEO and BAG-MAN EXTRAORDINAIRE for the SHARKE INSTITUTE. They illustrated the terrible OBTUSENESS about MADNESS endemic among $CAMH staff, and Satraps - especially Praetorius and Eel.

Patients approached them on THING STREET, parroting the same slogans: transforming lives, part of the family, removing stigma, new kind of hospital, etc. They'd been prescribed some bromides, with their meds.

DEANE said wouldn't it be NICE, if they were TRUE.

He gave DEANE the latest edition of THING STREET ASYLUM. It wasn't true either, but Johnny thought he might like to keep it as a souvenir....

Maintaining regular channels of communication with DEANE proved virtually impossible.

Johnny also gave DEANE an old cell-phone for the purpose, but all he got back was a placebo number. Whenever Johnny dialed the placebo number, at least in DEANE'S company, DEANE pretended the phone was BROKEN or at home in his dirty shorts.

Thing Street Asylum

Once JOHNNY caught DEANE with his phone out, like catching him with his pants down Johny supposed, so Johnny texted. DEANE cupped the phone in both hands so he could read the MESSAGE ALERT in the sunlight, but THERE WASN'T ONE!

He could sooner have reached him in the spirit realm.

Sorry to do this to you, JOHNNY!

Deane was his type....

Johnny provided beer, because it was his place.

JOHNNY reminded DEANE that he (Johnny) was a THING STREET STUMBLEBUM, an INDIGENT FAGGOT.

DEANE said he must have saved up all month for beer. In fact, Johnny had saved up. He withdrew his last $40 and lived for 2 weeks on cold-cuts. He stapled copies of his WITHDRAWAL SLIP to THING STREET telephone poles, along with advertisments for his book. No one read either.

Deane didn't read telephone poles.

He didn't have to read anything, to know that MAD people lived paltry cheque to cheque. Life was mainly famine.

But DEANE came to Johnny's place, and they drank beer. DEANE had a house, several cars, a boat, an expensive bicycle, and a lot of other toys. He complained that none of them worked. Climate change meant no wind for his sail-boat and no snow for skiing, his hot-tub was broken, his bicycle had a flat, etc.

DEANE would bring a few or he'd offer to pay, then realize he'd forgotten his wallet, etc. His girl kept him on an allowance.....

DEANE wanted Johnny to censor his criticism of MAX and the rest, whom he characterized as selfless advocates, great guys.

They worked the system and took care of themselves. Johnny never VOTED for them.

DEANE had been working for $CAMH too long....

He got Johnny to like him (which wasn't hard), then filled his head with bromides and his ass with antipsychotics. The bromides, like C. LAMPRINI EEL's stupid ONE DAY YOUR MENTAL ILLNESS WILL BE TREATED JUST LIKE MY POLYPS schtick, or PRAETORIUS's IMAGINE, NOW EVEN YOU CAN GET A JOB AT OUR NEW OUT OF THE WORLD CAFÉ, wore off before the antipsychotics, and left fewer side-effects except for slight disappointment for the very naïve.

Johnny supposed he shouldn't judge a noble enterprise by one working stiff, but he'd known numerous $CAMH stiffs over the years....

*****

Uncle Dr. PRAETORIUS not EXACTLY a MENSCH.... And WHY Should WE Care About HIS Polyps Anyway?

*****

He'd known fags they ghettoized with gay clients, slackers who didn't know or care that their clients were lousy, twits who lectured clients on mental hygiene when all they wanted was ciggies, slobs who made more medication errors than untrained staff, bullies, robbers....

Meanwhile, he'd listened to a constant stream of their PR bullshit. DEANE was definitely one of the better ones, even if the only thing about JOHNNY that interested DEANE was MEDICATION. And BEER....

They were ALL devoted to the MEDICAL MODEL Deane, Johnny, and Dead Guy. Especially Dead Guy....

Medication wasn't the deciding factor in MADNESS. It enabled them to live in a normal world, barely. Like BEER....

DEANE had been working for $CAMH forever.

How could he not know that the first rule for dealing with MAD PEOPLE was NEVER LIE, better to SAY NOTHING but DON'T LIE.

*****

When Butch got back he was furious. His knock sounded more entitled than ever. When Johnny opened the door, he immediately started to tell him what happened. The intake psychiatrist was a QUACK. The first moment he saw him, he got a very bad feeling.

He was a little man, with a shiny bald pate and a whispy goatee. He wore combat fatigues. Camouflage. Flack jacket and pants. He unctuously invited Butch to please be seated, young man.

Pioneers of Alienation

Johnny couldn't believe the luck. C. Lamprini Eel. The PIONEER OF SOCIAL CHANGE himself!

Butch began by confessing. He felt a little shaky. He'd had too much beer last night. Designing that BAR MENU....

Instead of listening the shrink suddenly brandished Butch's file and shouted, aha! This confirmed what he'd already strongly suspected from just a cursory glance at his history. Butch wasn't paranoid at all! He was just another FUCKING JUNKY!

He was going to put him in his sexy new ANTI-SMOKING PROGRAM at $CAMH!

Babyface got run over. He'd be the new POSTER BOY!

He'd sell CHAMPIX!

Johnny had to supress a smile. Butch, with his Rasputin beard, his duct-taped shower shoes, his aluminum cane(s), his chains, his air of entitlement stronger even than his after-shave....

That was some TRANSFORMATION....

Mad Pride Toronto's Answer to PSYCHOBABBLE....

Nothing RADICAL about it!

Butch talked about hearing new voices in his head. He had a whole coterie, talking to themselves again, even awarding themselves PRIZES, besides what else they scammed....

Communicator(s) of the Year....

The same old losers he heard every year during MENTAL HELL MONTH, the same tired SCHTICK, the corollary of all the identical BULLSHIT that $CAMH shat....

Butch said he was RADICAL. As in ANTIPSYCHIATRIC? No, the qualified radicalism of MAD PRIDE TORONTO - LAPDOGS....

Butch's idea of a GRASS ROOTS MOVEMENT FOR SOCIAL CHANGE was working for $CAMH and co-opting the psychiatric survivor / antipsychiatric radicalism from MAD PRIDE - neutering it by TRANSFORMING it into an ARTS FESTIVAL sponsored by Citizen Hearse....

To join you had to have experienced Mental Hell.

Johnny figured he'd qualify....

It was a GLOBAL MOVEMENT....

Understandably....

But what KIND of social change? CHUMP CHANGE, working for $CAMH....

Its 50-odd so-called "scientiests" and managers and CEO constituted an OVERPAID ELITE, in league with the corporate STATUS QUO, from HELL TALKYPHONE and Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre to LaBATT and Eli LILLY....

Butch screened everybody, neutering RADICALISM....

He babbled about CURRENT CONCERNS, but never had anything to say about $CAMH....

Every year he pushed an old brass bed from down Thing Street from the Asylum all the way to the Soup Kitchen.... He called it The Great Escape....

Another LIE! There was NO ESCAPE. He liked the BREAD & CIRCUSES of ANTIPSYCHIATRY, but not the POLITICS....

He was a LAPDOG....

A Pomeranian.....

There was no such thing as DEINSTITUTIONALIZATION....

They were still INMATES of the VIRTUAL ASYLUM of BAD PHARMA BRAIN DISEASE QUACKERY.....

There was no COMMUNITY SPACE....

SOUP KITCHENS....

MODEL SUITES....

It was very touching.... Butch liked TOUCHING MOMENTS.... He'd had a LOT....

He wasn't a big night-club and CASINO goer with fancy dance moves....

But he still got around....

He was pretty FUNKY....

He designed the MAD DRINK MENU....

Didn't somebody say something about ADDICTION?!

He was talking about RECOVERY....

See me NEXT YEAR (Trixie Zane)....

He was a JOINER....

He didn't want to separate from other outfits....

Just ANTIPSYCHIATRY....

He didn't want to celebrate SUFFERING....

Carlotta seconded him. What a beautiful community.... What a beautiful culture....

What was SHE on?

The wanted Mad Pride to have more of a CULTURAL FEEL....

The party PARTY!

So varied....
They wanted to TRANSFORM it!
They weren't ANTIPSYCHIATRIC any more. They believed in CHOICE and FREEDOM....
What CHOICE was there re community treatment orders, bad pharma meds, schizomimetic side-effects, undisclosed addictiveness, etc.?
They were building community capacity....
That meant devising MAD DRINK MENUS in Parkdale ART BARS. Johnny paid money to do this?
They didn't want to focus any more on the Mental Hell System....
Life was too BEAUTIFUL....
There was more to it than involuntary commitment and mental capacity....
And MAD DRINK MENUS?!
They said the old politics was TOO GHETTOIZING....
They didn't want to be a GHETTO SIDESHOW....
They wanted HEALING COMMUNITY....
CELEBRATION....
The ways they did art, and danced....
MACRAME....
No more Antipsychiatry!
It was an important part of HISTORY....
But it was OVER....
It was just a way of thinking about the POST PSYCHIATRIC WORLD....
It was a SPACE to TALK....
Provided one didn't talk too LOUD, or too RADICALLY....

MACRAME....

Butch worked just down Thing Street at $CAMH's Lovecamp Clinic in Parkdale. Johnny thought it was only fair to mention that, since he didn't - and he did all the talking.

MACRAME!

*****

"Hope is essential in creating a movement. In the spring of 2013, there's every reason to be hopeful."
- Trixie Zane, of the Casino for
Affliction and Mental Hell,
IABC "Chatty Cathy"
"One should never hope for anything. Hope is a thing invented by politicians to keep the electorate happy."
- Pier Paolo Pasolini
Director (1922-1975 - murdered, never got
a prize from IABC)

*****

POISON!
Dentsu POSTERBOY gets RADIATION SICKNESS!

No one realized who was behind Trixie's insulting campaign till she started to wear excessive amounts of masquera at her Town Hall rallies. She resembled a raccoon. She experienced violent mood swings on social media. She warned the audience that one in five of them was fucking crazy. She knew the signs, the indicators. They were hipsters. They wore dark glasses. They avoided crowds because they hated people. Then she started to giggle uncontrollably, like she'd just pulled one over them. She asked them them to see her tomorrow, for the cure. For a minimum $50 donation, tax deductible.
The whole time she was sampling sushi from an enormous cart that had been driven into the studio. She'd interrupt her speel to offer someone in the audience a piece of eel. It was shiny. Slightly fluorescent....
Detect, denounce, destroy....
It dawned on them like Nuclear Apocalypse. Her accomplice was Dentsu, the folks who spun FUKUSHIMA. They'd obviously given her a lot of radiated tsunami fish as a kick-back, and she was supporting them by eating it on live TV.
The tragic irony was not lost on them.
They couldn't DENY it any longer....

Trixie had a BRAIN DISEASE....

*****

All in your BRAIN?!
No, Johnny objected. The Other Place....
Might as WELL say.... YOUR ASS!

*****

Viva El Cancer!

*****

DentsuBos also worked for JEAN COUTU, a big Quebec Drug Store (BadPHARM) - naturally.

But who's the real
VAMPIRE? -
DETSUBOS? $CAMH?

They made a KILLING in WWII spinning it, for the FASCIST EMPIRE:

For all anyone knew, they were STILL FASCISTS. They were behind the Japanese Government's scampaign to "spin" the FUKUSHIMA DISASTER into something (literally) PALATABLE, by making everybody eat RADIOACTIVE FOOD.
Could they be trusted? Could $CAMH?
Just BELIEVE!

*****

That SMILE!

*****

$CAMH Sponsor Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre....
ALL DRESSED!
RICH PIZZA BARONESS with her INFAMOUS SHRINK by NIAGARA FALLS....
Let the FUCKER DROWN....
I got SCAMH BAD SCIENCE to do....
Why does nobody call her WHAT she IS?
MORAL IDIOT STEVE PAIKIN of STATE TVO.... KISSES HER ALL-DRESSED ASS....

*****

Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre donned half-glasses (knock-offs).
She made an announcement.
At $CAMH the BIGGEST BREAKTHROUGH EVER was (always) yet to come.
This had always been the CASE. If she'd had a breakthroughs, she'd have announced it from the grow-op on top the GATEWAY BUILDING.
She said they'd made tremendous progress toward eliminating the stigma that had so long been an obstacle for their patients, researchers and - PIZZA MAGNATES!
Hiding out in the coal-bin with her 40-ouncer while Alapaloozah drove her kids into a pylon on the 401. Emerging to stigmatize 1 in 5 as mentally hell regardless whether their hellness was schizophrenia, internet addiction, or - indeed - alcoholism and pizzaphrenia....
In her intellectual night all the COWS were CRAZY - except herself!

Thing Street Asylum

*****

The Big Studios of Asylums and Casinos had to divest themselves of their theatre chains, because notwithstanding the loyal patronage of paupers like and including Johnny, they'd never been able to make themselves sufficiently popular to justify their costly bloated existence.

They bombed across the lifespan and around the world. Especially in Pomona. Cheap inept tactless and vulgar productions and indifferent record-keeping mixed with a lot of flavor-of-the-month silliness with too many big-earners who still couldn't fill the gallery.

Was it any wonder they went broke?

They called it a merger, but Johnny knew. There was something coming bigger than televison. Bigger than Trixie's last tedtalk....

*****

After the province ordered the Reception Hospital to close because of the appalling inadequacy of its premises, city and provincial officials, including C.K. Clarke (for the Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene) met on May 27, 1919, to discuss alternatives.

In the minutes Controller Cameron explaied that the Reception Hospital had been intended to treat the mentally ill "before they have the stigma of being placed in an asylum" (2-3).

When Cameron posed a rhetorical question whether it was a fact "that the Province is charged with the care of these mentally afflicted people" (7), the Provincial Secretary reminded him that, strictly speaking, provincial jurisdiction was only over those who had been certified to be insane. The whole point of the Reception Hospital was treatment of "those who are not certified to be insane, but are suffering from some trouble of an indefinite nature."

He passed the buck, though the city officials appeared equally willing to pass it back, as the interests of the mentally ill were lost in yet another jurisdictional dispute. It was as if, to enjoy state support, the mad had to suffer stigmatization; only those who could afford to, could escape it.

*****

She insisted. Recovery was inevitable - across the lifespan and around the world.

Long before there had been a $CAMH, people had simply got better. However every year at $CAMH they cried for more and money.

Worse, they got it.

She bragged how they'd grown from an institution that took in ten million per campaign to one that routinely scored three times that amount.

However, the recovery rate didn't keep pace.

She cleared her throat to deliver the punch line, that their most significant breakthroughs were still in the future.

If that meant curing everyone, he'd heard it before. He'd read about it too. The future was past.

All she needed was another $200 million - to take $CAMH where MADKIND had not voyaged before.

To discover the source of Thing Street, the Head of the Nile of Brain Disease.

To reverse the Niagara Falls of Dementia and Cure Everyone.

She was raving as she referred to the grounds of Thing Street Asylum as a CAMPUS.

He wondered what they were doing now.

The slogans and swastikas of Brain Disease Fascism waved the answer from the towers and minarets of New Berchtesgaden at Thing and Ozztown.

Been a long time gone, O Constantinople!

They changed it....

She and Trixie and the rest had reduced the complexity of Mental Hell to sound bites - and mad people to followers of their brain-diseased leadership cult.

She waxed visionary imaging what the world would look like after BREAKTHROUGH.

She repeated the word without the article, like the name of a patent medicine with incantatory power.

Johnny heard Satchmo singing in his husky voice. [With BREAKTHROUGH] "I see this and that...."

Why wait 15 years, when it cost two hundred million now?

Apart from brain-stimulation and ME-medicine (personalized medication exploiting genetic information), most of the things she "saw" in 15 years were things $CAMH - or any half-decent hospital - should have been doing already -

such as referring people to the right care-givers (instead of endlessly reprocessing them), taking care of children and seniors (instead of drugging and warehousing them?), etc....

It wasn't rocket science....

So it all begged the question that embarrassingly (for Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre and $CAMH) kept popping up, like Kleenex.

What were they doing now?

Johnny heard murmurs. The rows of citizenship medals on the puffy chests of clean air ambassadors tinkled as they turned, searching for dissenters.

They were goons. He wanted a cigarette. It was like wanting the moon.

Since there was no good reason why they weren't doing them now, why should anyone believe they WOULD be - with a lot more money - in 15 years?

WHY? Foxy herself supplied the answer, the only part of her TRASH TALK that struck him as true. Which of course, she didn't get!

There was no reason. She herself was a notoriously unscrupulous liar, and $CAMH really was more than a hospital. It was a MOVEMENT - and worse than a MOVEMENT - a RELIGION - a CULT - and she among its chief mountebanks.

She didn't require reason. She demanded - and got - BELIEF.

Sometimes to be more was to be less.

Apparently, from her own statements - MUCH less.

The so-called BREAKTHOUGH CAMPAIGN was fraudulent - offering no breakthroughs, just things $CAMH should already have been doing but wasn't. For this, they wanted more money?!

It was a faith-based media construct.[53]

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[53] Dr. Joseph Workman, "Insanity of the religious-emotional type, and its occasional physical relations," American Journal of Insanity 26.1 (1869-70), 33-48. In the report for 1859, after analyzing cases by kind (suicidal cases: 21; religious delusion: 24; hereditary taint: 18; General paralysis 5; epilepsy: 4), Workman focuses on "religious delusion." He argues that it should be further broken down into "physical religious excitement" and "reasoning mania," the latter being on the rise. It especially afflicts people suffering from the delusion of having committed "the unpardonable sin" (13) and who believe themselves to be damned. "Reasoning mania" appears to derive from Esquirol; Workman suggests that some varieties of "Religious Madness" are just specific kinds of the "Moral Insanity" discussed above.

It is impossible to reassure patients with "Reasoning Madness" by reason, because they have already reasoned too much, and can refute any arguments made to dissuade them from reasoning more. The Asylum then becomes important as the only place where they can really get any rest -- they need the "mental vacuity of a mad-house" (14), as Workman puts it. According to Workman the madness of the other patients is virtually therapeutic for these "reasoning maniacs," since it precludes the latter from engaging in arguments, and also illustrates as in a mirror, and more convincingly than any reasoning could, their own deludedness.

In the same report Workman discusses under "religious excitement" the case of a woman who had been committed once before, in 1857, when her "noisy, obscene, profane, indecent, quarrelsome, destructive and restless" behaviour (25) was attributed to malaria. Since the woman's symptoms are the same on the second occasion, Workman concludes that the true `exciting cause' of her madness was not religious excitement, but malarial infection. Already in a "disturbed mental condition" because of her illness, the woman was driven mad by "religious uproar." Workman suggests that in many cases of alleged "religious excitement," such excitement was an essentially accidental cause of a condition to which the patient was already prone by other factors; something else might easily have had the same effect.

In the second case of a man of sixty-one "religious excitement" causes mental disturbance but not insanity. Disturbed by attending "religious excitement meetings," the patient is "bled, blistered, and purged" (26) by two doctors, becomes "incurably mad," and dies. Workman suggests that while the patient might have "appeared insane" (26), he was in fact reacting rationally to the situation; the preacher who upset him so much, and the doctors who failed to consider the reasons for his behaviour, and who drove him permanently mad with their brutal treatment and eventually killed him, are themselves irrational.

Only the last case of a "boy" of 19 appears to be mainly the result of "religious excitement." The young man believes that he has committed the "unpardonable sin" (26). Convinced that the "beast of the bottomless pit" lodges in his head, he picks at his skin till he creates a "deep sore" in his forehead. Yet even here Workman implies that the boy's delusion might be the result of something else, perhaps the deprivation of this boy's life on a Canadian bush farm, his principal entertainment being the Bible and `such religious books as he could obtain' (26). It is the greatest implicit criticism of recent treatment, that the most positive factor in his recovery is being a patient too late in history to be subjected to it.

"Religious-Emotional Insanity" is classed among those forms of madness, such as "Puerperal Madness," whose characteristic "moral contrasts, or utter reversals of conduct and character" (33) impress the "uninitiated observer" (33). Workman seems quite impressed himself, as he describes the "dethronement" (33) of morality in "Puerperal Madness," and the afflicted patient's sudden expression of "foreign" ideas in an "alien" language.

Workman himself feels "constrained" to regard such outbursts as "the product of morbid extemporization" (33), if only out of distaste for regarding such phenomena "moralistically," or from "a mere metaphysical stand-point," as expressions of "latent depravity" (33). He luridly over-writes, to characterize this "demonic" position as itself a lurid fiction, as he describes how, according to its partisans, latent depravity "finding now an opportune occasion for its evincement, throws aside the fetters of conventional restraint, and stalks forth as the undissembling exponent of a corrupt and sinful heart" (33-4). However, the "reasonableness" of his own position is expressed in language scarcely less metaphorical, not without its own value-laden metaphors, distracting analogies, and indeed "metaphysics":

> the medical observer who has well studied the wondrous fabric of our organization, and the functions of its various parts, and who recognises the wisely ordained inter-relations subsisting between mind and its confederated corporeal dependencies, interprets the language of insanity, whether of the puerperal, or any other form, in accordance with a widely different canon. (34)

Thing Street Asylum

It should have been scrapped. She should have gone back to pimping cold-cuts and wieners for Citizen Hearse on Thing Street.

Trixie should have gone back to Hollywood. Maybe they needed her car.

Meanwhile she boasted that where once stigma had been so strong that the community was hesitant to be associated with $CAMH, now billionaire donors' names proudly blazed on $CAMH buildings and shopping centres....

Commercial Retail Space....

Johnny noticed she'd slipped from removing stigma from clients to removing it from billionaire donors.

Another Freudian slip?

A PAY SLIP!

A corporation slapping its moniker on a building was re-stigmatizing in worse ways. Reminding Johnny that now he was a client of Bell, Labatt, Beamish, Lilly, Pfizer and Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre herself....

They beamed south across the Lake all the way to the Falls, a beacon.

The relationship of the mind to the various physical or physiological components of the body as that of a federal power to dependent states or provinces is obviously one of Dr Workman's favourite analogies, perhaps his favourite topos of the 1860s. Its physiological tenor seems consistent with his next assertion that religious insanity is really due to the disorder of a "special organ" in a "morbid condition" (34). To effect a cure, all one has to do is remove the morbidity.

The reversion to obscenity which is characteristic of "Puerperal Madness" becomes radically more problematic when it is associated with religion. Workman's implicit point seems to be that, given the association of such outbursts with demonic possession in non-religious madness, the association in religious forms should be at once stronger and more problematic.

Through such euphemisms as "the inexperienced" and "the uninitiated" it is apparent that what Workman really fears is much less the attitude of colleagues than the attitude of "the public" who cannot easily accept that "assiduous readers of the Bible and good books, are, nevertheless, at times addicted to the use of very profane, or obscene language" (34-5). For Workman insanity, or at least its `religious-emotional' form, seems to effect a kind of reversal in those it affects, transforming pre-existing traits into their exact opposites, "fervent prayer, or tranquil expression of pious thoughts, to the utterance of horrifying imprecations, or ribald blasphemy" (35).

The case of a woman of "excellent religious character," but who was nevertheless afflicted with such "paroxysms," illustrates such a transformation. Her appearing to suffer as well from a diseased uterus, facilitates a transition to topic of the connection between "religious melancholy and abnormal condition of the generative organs" (35). Finally sexuality is added to an already volatile mixture of religion and seemingly demonic possession.

Workman and his colleagues have evidently had to address precisely this combination in female patients; in such cases the doctor risked becoming himself a sexual component of the delusions:

> For my own part, I have long since learned to be very shy of every female patient in whose case marked religious emotional manifestations have been presented. I have known some very unpleasant mistakes made in private practice, from inadvertency in this direction. (36)

He recounts the case of a woman with uterine trouble and a disposition to religious madness, who falls in love with her physician after a few examinations. Workman considers the latter partly responsible, for not having kept his visits "short and unfrequent as possible." After the physician severs his relationship with the afflicted woman, Dr Workman dismisses her as insane, but her friends believe she is suffering from "disappointed affection" and blame his colleague.

One of his own patients, admitted into the asylum in 1860, "aged 39, of very delicate structure, the mother of four children" (37), and a constant reader of religious books, desired to "prolong conversation." He recalls how she ran away from home and was later found with her youngest child, in the church to which she belonged. She improves after four months when she is brought home by her husband; two years later her condition deteriorates again and she is brought back to the asylum, with the same symptoms only much worse than before. Dr Workman somewhat delicately notes the "somatic movements" of "uterine trouble": "It is not necessary before an audience familiar with such occurrences, to enter into painful details" (37). The subsequent autopsy confirms that the "primary seat" of the disease was the uterus and ovaries; the woman's regular doctor confirms that "he had found the erotic tendency a serious difficulty to deal with" (38). Workman seems to have discouraged what appear to have been the woman's sexual advances, first by not allowing her to prolong her conversations, and second by preserving a "duly cool demeanour towards her" (37).

Workman's thesis is finally stated in a rhetorical question: "Does a rational psychology forbid belief in the conjuncture of emotional-religious insanity, and a disturbed condition of the sexual economy?" (40). Yet the way Workman phrases his thesis seems deliberately misleading, since the real question must be not whether the implications of these cases are compatible with science, but whether they are compatible with religion or at least contemporary notions of it. The later rephrasing of the question belies what it is that Workman really doubts: "Is the idea opposed to the revelations of Physiology, or Pathology?" (40). Workman's idea is more emphatically opposed to the "revelations" of religion, as he accounts for "religious insanity" in such a way that it could be taken for religion itself, essentially because he never clarifies precisely where religious behaviour ends and religious insanity begins.

The idea of there being any connection at all seems rooted in the notion that the relationship of mind and body is, at least when working well, a "continually perfecting process" (40). Workman cites authorities on "Psycho-somatics" like Professor Lazarus, and "the late lamented Griesenger" (40). But he seems to anticipate some sort of clash with religious authority when, even as he encourages colleagues to persevere at "Psycho-somatics," he warns them to "shut out all other considerations than our unwavering allegiance to truth" (41). Those "other considerations" must have been considerable.

Otherwise, he would not have found it necessary to conclude by arguing that, provided of course that some sort of "psycho-somatic" connection really exists, its religious/sexual corollary actually indicates "divine forethought" (41). Some sort of connection between man's religious capacity and his "procreative organization" (41) is precisely what separates him from beasts. Normally such a connection serves as an invisible control; however, "under changed conditions" (42), the religious connection becomes only too obvious. Thus Workman defends the connection between religion and sexual disorder, on the grounds that it is an aberration of a connection that is always present but usually, because of its benignancy, unnoticed. This is perfectly consistent with Workman's thesis, expressed earlier in the same article, that "the vices of

Bell, Labatt, Beamish, Lilly, Pfizer....
Jascha's Haberdashery....

Bright Boy Wanted....

What a waste of electricity....

The evil - bathetic, mendacious, misleading, mercenary, dogmatic, sloganeering, sycophantic, conflicted, antidemocratic and fascist - ethos of $CAMH - that was what needed to change. That didn't require more money.
That required a CHANGE of MANAGEMENT.
A MIRACLE!

He needed a stiff one.

BELIEVE!

Johnny was roused from his reverie by the screams of jack-booted security goons stomping some client they'd mistaken for himself.

*****

Just BELIEVE Trixie Zane! Three of you will (probably) be schizophrenic! Stigmatizing statistical RUBBISH! Is that all there is.... to the BRAIN DISORDER CIRCUS?! Just BELIEVE?! So much for EVIDENCE-BASED Mental Hell....

More proof (there was always more) that $CAMH was run by fools, and knaves. Who wrote this one? Edward Shorter?
Because the "new" meaning was even more offensive than the old. The old meant that mental hellness and madness weren't real. The new meant that they weren't real if they couldn't be found - physically - in the brain.
That cut both ways, didn't it? Because then virtually NONE of the disorders in their new DSM5 were real.
Mental illness and madness were ideas and concepts invoking which a majority of the population had always designated a significant minority MAD. To speak of them as in the brain the way $CAMH meant "in the brain" was fundamentally misleading.
They were in the world....
This was just more misleading rubbish from the PR department of $CAMH and its IABC laureate. But like most garbage it said a lot about the people that produced it - the knaves and fools of $CAMH.

Sorry to do this to you, Johnny!

They didn't give a damn about the chronic, societal aspects of mental illness and madness. They cared only about cartel-funded brain-based "research" to justify wholesale drugging of the population - for a "cure" that didn't even exist.
Human Trafficking!
$CAMH was a hopeless case, a lost cause. But he couldn'tt help noticing the self-serving terminology. It was all in YOUR head, HIS head - as if $CAMH - their stupidity, falsehood, their greed - had nothing to do with it.
He thought of that poor woman reduced to a head in a Petrie dish. She wasn't alive so she couldn't even die, although she wanted to.

---

humanity seem to be but perverted, or badly educated virtues" (35).

Delineating relationships among such volatile factors as religion, sexuality, and madness, enables Workman to define his own role all the more heroically. The controversial nature of his subject entitles him to the same vatic and prophetic stance he adopted to speak out against masturbation. This is subsequently reinforced by his application to himself of terms like "initiate" implying a special knowledge or mystical or religious lore. Terms with strong scriptural and religious connotations like "wondrous fabric" or "wisely ordained inter-relations" are applied to his subject but redound to himself, the "medical observer" as pious exegete of a quasi-biblical "language of insanity." He does much more than simply read these "wisely ordained inter-relations" where they are obvious, but actually re-asserts them where they have been forgotten, in the very connections between sexuality and religion that religious people themselves find so disturbing. Thus he seems to supplant his opposition.

Finally Workman seems to make some rather self-critical connections between the history of religious madness and the history of his own profession and development. On the one hand such connections are self-critical; on the other, they are extremely self-interested and sometimes rather flattering. His assimilation of the history of religious madness into the history of emerging psychiatry suggests that the latter is now the sane religion.

That was Johnny.

This had always been the right-wing FASCIST LINE. There was EVERYTHING the matter with JOHNNY, NOTHING the matter with SOCIETY - NOTHING to do with SOCIETY at all. What could be the MATTER with THAT - so long as THE TRAINS WERE ON TIME? RIGHT?

Over their bright shining lie of a HELL-SPONSORED GATEWAY BUILDING, they'd hoisted another big, BRIGHT SHINING LIE, the VIRTUAL SWASTIKA of MENTAL HYGIENE, the NEW FASCISM of Mental Hell
BIG BADPHARMA and NEW EUGENICS: MENTAL HYGIENE all over again....

*****

DENTSU / DENTSUBOS was the largest, most sophisticated PR firm in the world, not known for openness or democratic values.

The Casino for Affliction and Mental Hell could not have got them cheap, but they did a SHITTY job of Mental Hell PR.

It was hard to imagine a WORSE performance, short of donning NAZI uniforms and raping a few COMFORT WOMEN.

$700,000 plus REASONS to SMILE! Just BELIEVE!

Presenting the STRATEGIC PLAN.... MORE LIES!

It was presented as a series of SLOGANS, born on placards and "sandwich-boards" by beaming $CAMHos.

They LOVED this sort of thing - reducing complicated Mental Hell to a few mantras - tweets! - which were LIES or - when they were TRUE - BAD NEWS. Very bad news....

*****

GREAT LEADER Trixie SANE's FIRST DIRECTIVE: HUMAN TRAFFICKING....

CARE PATHWAYS was something she dreamt up smoking a fag in Doc Praetorius's crummy Parkette. Those worn scruffy-looking patches resembled nothing so much as his own buggy bald pate.

She'd secretly always wanted to butt-out on it. Grinding the deadman into the mud with her stiletto heal was the next best thing, and really somewhat satisfying....

In reality there was no pathway, only a REVOLVING DOOR, passing the captive client back and worth within the system, like the pawn on a game board - every time he passed go, she billed for it - which was the WHOLE OBJECT of her GAME.

Did the client really benefit? Who knew? It was HUMAN TRAFFICKING, processing and reprocessing clients in virtual slavery, to charge them fees and - above all - sell them ZONCOLITE and POEMFORTHEDAY....

The CLINICAL AND SOCIAL NEEDS of CLIENTS were DEALT WITH in Emile Durkheim House, Yucca Flats, Oakridge - Citizen Hearse's SWELL RESORTS.

Needs? They were DISAPPEARED.... They vanished into GROUND ZERO....

She said she was MAKING IT EASIER TO ACCESS SERVICES AT $CAMH. Johnny figured she must have published her cell number down at the Coffeeslime. Her cell phone, he meant....

Otherwise it was impossible to get into one of her MENTAL HELL CASINOS. Her standard line was "This CLIENT just doesn't SUIT our RACKET" - at toe felt-topped crap table where all the major croupiers gathered after hours to discuss BUSINESS.

A game of solitaire among multiple personalities of the same syndic.

Shouldn't $CAMH rackets ATTEMPT to SUIT the CLIENT?!
Really?! How NAIVE!

They got dizzy....

They BLACKED OUT!

*****

GREAT LEADER Trixie SANE's SECOND DIRECTIVE: PARTY LOYALTY....

She loved to talk about excellence. $CAMH was the Centre of Excellence and she was the Centre of $CAMH.
Obviously, it was located up her ASS. Her TEAM-PLAYERS paid it more than lip-service. They called it CLINICAL CARE.
She kept her shrinks on a leash. She didn't want them getting loyal to the non-corporate clients. Every $CAMH doctor was really Trixie Zane's doctor....
With their PLACKARDS they resembled PARTY MEMBERS in a ONE PARTY MAOIST STATE.
So they were....

*****

GREAT LEADER Trixie SANE'S THIRD DIRECTIVE: BUILD The NEW BERLIN of the CULT of BRAIN DISEASE....

$CAMH was notoriously SCHIZOMIMETIC. Bad drugs, worse hardware.
Butt-ugly buildings. The trademarks of BREWERS and JUNK FOOD CORPORATIONS adorned their fascist facades. She even hung a MILLER LITE sign over the Nurses' Station in Emerg.
It was pretty....
She just liked it....
LaBatt, Beamish, Bell, McCAIN - beer and pizza - it was all BAD - nothing THERAPEUTIC!
There was a Handy Haven and a Shagburger Joint but NOTHING was more STIGMATISING than $CAMH and HELL TALKYPHONE.
The sign flashed atop the Hell Gateway Building: LIKE Being There?! It WAS there!

It was a WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT to corporate clients but not to Johnny, or to anyone he knew.
None of their PR was evidence-based. The fascist firms they hired made sure. It was ALL a lie!
"Transforming Lives" - no! "All in YOUR HEAD" - no! "Every reason to be HOPEFUL" - no! "On the CUSP of a BREAKTHROUGH" - no, no, no!
Confronted with her mendacity, Trixie made a pert moue with her delicate mouth. But they're so pretty, she lisped. Just Believe!

The NEW KIND OF HOSPITAL was the non evidence-based headquarters of a New Age CORPORATE CULT - of BRAIN DISEASE!

They were crummy buildings. They were dark, the corridors were long and narrow, the rooms were tiny. O, what a feeling!

*****

GREAT LEADER Trixie SANE'S FOURTH DIRECTIVE: BELIEVE! Mental Hellness IS a BRAIN DISEASE....

She wanted to identify the factors that led to mental hellness, so she could STIGMATISE people like Johnny - and Johnny - before they'd even done anything wrong.
She should have put HERSELF at the top of the list. She was a FACTOR. With Jim Jones!
She didn't even know what MENTAL HELLNESS was. Nonetheless, when Johnny refused to sell her that Zsa Zsa Special cheap, he had it BAD. Then she didn't need neuroscience, epigenetics, and pharmacogenetics. Even the DSM only talked about DISORDERS.
Johnny was certainly DISORDERED. He was the one in five of the one in five. She'd known that from the beginning. She would have done something about it too, but she was just a WORKING GIRL....

*****

GREAT LEADER Trixie SANE'S FIFTH DIRECTIVE: PROPGANDA is REALITY....

Her emphasis was entirely on SPINNING - reducing the complicated realities of Mental Hell to a money-making slogan, and manipulating the public with FALSE HOPE, with POEMFORTHEDAY and ZONCOLITE.

By spinning she meant many things, from interminable torturous CARE PATHWAYS and the REVOLVING DOOR in the lobby of her new CASINO, to the misrepresentation of these devices as BREAKTHROUGHS in the glossy publications of Vixen Foxy's media machine.

However, the salient characteristic of her CARE PATHWAYS, likewise her revolving FRONT DOOR, that they never allowed their user to ever break through them - they merely kept turning - and so did she.

That was their beauty. She could say she was on the CUSP of a BREAKTHROUGH, confident that that's exactly where she'd remain - FOREVER. Meanwhile, with every pointless revolution of the turbine, with every prehensile flash of plexiglass fins she made more money....

*****

GREAT LEADER Trixie SANE'S SIXTH DIRECTIVE: YOU are ALL SCHIZOPHRENIC....

Drive SOCIAL CHANGE.... BACKWARD!

Whenever a mendacious bunch of quacks started to babble about "social change" it meant CHANGE FOR THE WORSE.

The last time - here - was the Mental Hygiene Movement - which made it a DISEASE to have an UNWED MOTHER.

The last - abroad - was the THIRD REICH - which made it a crime to be JEWISH or GAY. It certainly wasb UNHEALTHY - they'd sterilized you, cut off your balls - murdered you. Didn't they, Trixie - with your SHRINK by Niagara Falls, letting his client drown while he pursued the higher wisdom - the wil-o-the-wisp - the CURE.....

"Evidence-based" - there was NOTHING evidence-based about them.

"Sensitivity" - look at how they eploited suicide, exploited the DEAD.

"Public awareness" - the smoke and mirrors of TRANSFORMING LIVES, NEW ERA Weasel-Theatre, DENTSUBOS professional liars....

$CAMH was run by fools and knaves. Trixie Zane was their LEADER. She should RESIGN.

Or abstain....

Hell, they'd reverse The Falls of Dementia....

Revive old disorders....

One Thousand and One Popular Delusions.....

Coelacanths swimming in the collective ether.... fins beating rhythmically like turbines....

They'd bring it all back....

Not a COMEBACK! A RETURN!

You couldn't see schizophrenia in a brain scan but you could see the scales....

*****

Another Paid Commercial Suppository...

$CAMH Public Affairs proudly announced it - from the TO STAR - HOSTAR - Toronto's COMPLIANT JOURNALISTS - GREEN JOURNALISTS - MONEY GREEN....

LOOK at the LANGUAGE....

The $CAMH of TOMORROW. It reminded Johnny of ORAL ROBERTS, a FAITH-HEALER his aunt used to watch with greater scepticism than most HOSTAR journalists. Johnny guessed $CAMH / IABC / DENTSUBOS "communicators" had STOLEN this schtick from BROTHER ROBERTS' "CATHEDRAL of TOMORROW" - for the BRAIN DISEASE CATHEDRAL OF TODAY....

INSIDE LOOK. No doubt! Didn't somebody ONCE say something to the HOSTARS about OBJECTIVITY? They didn't have any. Too busy with their CORPORATE CLIENTS - just like $CAMH....

STORIES THAT SHAPE SCAMH. That was the trouble. All SPIN - no substance - BELIEVE....

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT. Meaning PAID Commercial Supplement. Which JOHNNY paid for when he BOUGHT their SHITRAG - now smeared with the latest DEPOSITION from Weasel-Theatre and her SHITHOUSE FOUNDATION....

CLOSING THE GAP. Circling the WAGGONS?

TRANSFORM THE LIVES OF THOSE WE SERVE. That PHRASE (again) - and MOST INSULTING LIE - so SICK of HEARING IT - it was SCHIZOMIMETIC - because they were TRANSFORMING NOBODY - they COULDN'T - it COULDN'T - BE DONE (and - if it COULD - they would have beeen the LAST TO DO IT....)....

BREAKING NEW GROUND AND GIVING NEW HOPE. They were digging again in POTTER'S FIELD. Resurrectionist!

The THINGS were MENTAL HYGIENE, SOCIAL ENGINEERING, BEHAVIOUR CONTROL....

They DIDN'T WORK....

Thing Street....

M'Lady Margaret "Dumont" McCAIN, Uncle PAUL GARFINKEL, Chatty Cathy SANE, Champix Tony GEORGE, Dr. PETRONI(U)S the MESMERIST, C. Lamprini Eel, MSW, etc.....

It was their CATCHMENT AREA....

As for GIVING NEW HOPE....

It was the SCIENCE THAT SERVES PEOPLE. Roasted on a spit....

They were referring to genetics - me medicine. Johnny thought he "M'LADY" protested too much. If you reacted badly to their doping it wasn't because their JUNK really was BAD - it was because YOUR GENES WERE - DIRTY!

Bully - for Eli Lilly, Pfizzer, AstraZeneca, et al....

The CLIENTS their so-called SCIENCE really SERVED....

PERSONALISED MEDICINE? Wasn't that really just a MARKETING TOOL for HI-TECH MACHINERY - to PUSH JUNK?

They had nothing on Porkdale Pushers. Fellini dispensed it already.. Totally unregulated. Nothing was more personalized. Some client getting a back-payment? A big hit from Odious Pee? He was there every time with the FIX. It didn't matter how often LIFE DISAPPOINTED HIM. How many times the money ran out. On payday he was all forgiveness.

Butch and Bruce were already waiting for him....

The PERSONALIZED APPROACH.....

Thing and Ozztown....

Adjacent tables....

Yes, Trixie Zane and Fellini were equally AFFECTING CHANGE TO HELP CLIENTS LIVE THEIR LIVES, thought Johnny though they should have written EFFECTING - considering the millions they paid their Communications Department....

Butch! It was just as well he never became a doctor!

*****

Fools in their OPEN CARS: Alapaloozah Junior with his Moll: $CAMH PosterBOY for BadPHARMA BRAIN DISEASE: WaBENZI Taking the PUBLIC for A RIDE....

Sacred Symbols of the CULT of BRAIN DISEASE. When You SEE, SPIT!

The Casino for Affliction and Mental Hell of Trixie Zane. The Reich of Brain Disease....

Wall to wall POSTER PEOPLE EXPLOITED TO FRONT FOR BADPHARMA BRAIN DISEASE QUACKERY....

No criticism, no JOURNALISM - from TOSTAR HOSTARS - a TOTAL WHITEWASH, A FUCKOVER of the PUBLIC on BEHALF OF $CAMH - the PHARMACEUTICALS WERE CELEBRATING....

A GIFT to ELI LILLY....

Hoopla!

*****

A native woman makes it, and $CAMH takes the credit. AA could have done it - FREE!

A teenager makes it - so FAR - they SAY - and $CAMH takes the credit. Not ONE WORD of HEALTHY SKEPTICISM - and NOT ONE WORD of criticism re the 12-bed unit (count'em - 12 beds) and the inevitable SELECTION PROCESS (for POSTER PEOPLE) - and the doubtful "necessity" of an INTERGENERATIONAL WELLNESS CENTRE ($CAMHGLISH for GYMN) in the FIRST PLACE.

The whole point of the article was $CAMH "TRANSFORMED" some "WORTHLESS PIECE OF FLESH" into a "REGULAR PERSON" - a POSTER BOY!

$CAMH took some victim with LOW SELF-ESTEEM and EXPLOITED HIM MORE THAN EVER.

It was C.K. SHARKE all over again!

The 1920s!

Then their was a glowing panegryric to Sean the Kidd for operating a GROW-OP on top of the Gateway Building....

He was a SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR....

They all were....

They had jobs....

Fronting for Brain Disease....

Internet Addiction, Obesity, Asperger's Syndrome, Bad Driving....

*****

Trixie Zane took in $672,747.40 for manipulating the public....

Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre only got $109,488.44 for Movie Night....

Sean the Kidd got $109,577.72 but he was a Social Entrepreneur.... He ran a GROW-OP....

*****

Johnny'd barely finished typing when the telephone rang. BUTCH! He was escalating.

The shrink told him he wasn't MAD, he was going to kick him off ODIOUS PEE, he was going to enroll him in the NO SMOKING program, BUTCH was an ADDICT, BUTCH should join AA but it wouldn't help, etc., etc....

His life was ruined.

He'd never get the OSCAR!

He brandished old clippings from Hearse Papers. He had a file. Episodes spanning several decades. He made the supper hour news. International incidents. Terrorism!

Johnny had no choice. He dialed the PLACEBO NUMBER. DEANE picked up!!!

I-I-I'm s-s-so over-w-whelmed, he said. But he pulled himself together sufficiently to say, NOTHING HAD CHANGED!

He suggested Butch TAKE A SHOWER....

With his BULOVA WATCH....

*****

Yes! She really said that....

Johnny still couldn't BELIEVE the fatuity of SANE's remarks on CITRUS SHAMPOO - of all things. So for $672,000 plus $74,000 in benefits, she got to tell him (1) that he was a HUMAN BEING (thanks for that, Chatty) and (2) that he (therefore - or was it vice versa?) liked CITRUS SHAMPOO.

Of all the crap to say to mad people living on a pension. He'd never even HEARD of CITRUS SHAMPOO.

*****

THE NEW $CAMH....

A NEW KIND of HOSPITAL

A CASINO....

For MENTAL HELL....

SALO....

An EVIL DRUG-DEALING CORPORATE CULT.... Run by TROGLODYTE MUTATIONS.... Amphibious Coelacanths.....

They spun the wheel....

Evolution was something of a crap-shoot....

Social change was even worse....

Pioneers of Alienation

The music went round and round....

Making a sound like bones rattling, pebbles grinding on the Precambrian Shore....

*****

More CULT LANGUAGE....
DEFEAT DENIAL meant everyone really thought, talked, and acted the way $CAMH said they did.
Everyone said stupid things about Mental Hell, except $CAMH. Which was itself a very stupid statement, but there were more.
It was a NEW KIND OF HOSPITAL, but they didn't say which. It was a Fascist Dispensary in a a NEW MENTAL HELL SALO REPUBLIC on THING STREET....
They changed the names of things, as if they thought that changed the things themselves.....
They called the dispensary DOWNTOWN WEST and the clients who went there INTENSIVES....
STALAG WEST....
They transformed LIVE ONES with the discredited policies of the NAZIS and their own C.K. SHARKE....
MENTAL HYGIENE, EUGENICS, SOCIAL ENGINEERING....
Funded by RICH DOWAGERS....
Swamis and RACE TRACK TOUTS....
.
Trixie and Praetorius trolled for them....
Vixen Foxy Weasel-Threatre lured them into Thing Street Bars for CONVERSION THERAPY....
It was a CULT of BRAIN DISEASE....
A LEADERSHIP CULT....
Trixie and Praetorius were its VIRTUAL SAINTS....
MEDIA CONSTRUCTS....
MOUTHPIECES....
For a cool million each they reminded the public. They were HUMAN.... They liked CITRUS SHAMPOO....
Their so-called "SCIENTISTS" were CONSCRIPT MAOIST CARICATURES in a ONE-PARTY BRAIN DISEASE REICH....

It was ALL IN THE ASS....!

It was NON-EVIDENCE BASED MENTAL HELL....
A BUBBLE as BIG as the WORLD....
A SOAP BUBBLE in a shark tank as big as the UNIVERSE....
CITRUS SHAMPOO....

*****

He felt like those satirists of the 3rd Reich who realized they just couldn't make the FASCISTS more ridiculous than they already were. No matter what they did to mock their absurdity, NOBODY got the JOKE.
It was as if they'd been DRUGGED - aha!
He attempted to dialogue with Bela and the Swami at TVO during the discussion of the government's latest Mental Hell bulla, but discovered the so-called DIALOGUE was so censored it was the same OLD MONOLOGUE.
It was MODERATED (CENSORED!) by the Swami, who took sides against him when he said he was tired of people talking about REMOVING STIGMA while only REINFORCING STIGMA (the whole TRANSFORMING LIVE ONES, indeed Mental Hell / MENTAL ILLNESS schtick).
The Swami informed him he was being ALLOWED to dialogue (he thought it was a right), and warned him that, while HE and BELA welcomed (lie!) his point of view they did NOT welcome his use of CAPITALS (it was partly because he couldn't ITALICIZE - and for EMPHASIS - NOT ALLOWED in CANADA or at least on STATE TVO).
Well, when Johnny informed BELA's MAN that his use of capitals WAS his point of view, he was immediately CUT OFF.

So much for $CAMH: State Capitalists Advancing Mental Hell DEPRESSION TV with BELA and the Swami.
The main discourse was equally impossible, with Praetorius (he thought it was) fronting for $CAMH, talking about the problems of Mental Hell and CURE - Johnny suggested that the problem would go away if terms like Mental Hell would GO AWAY - to be replaced by a richer, truer CONCEPT....

MADNESS.

That thought was seconded by someone who reflected that the problem was MONEY - $CAMH just couldn't be $CAMH talking to rich DOWAGERS talking about MADNESS as a permanent part of the HUMAN CONDITION.

Not what HELL TELEPHONY wanted to hear about their disgruntled employees. They wanted to hear they were DEPRESSED - DEPRESSED because they were SICK....

This brought him back to the next STATE CAPITALISTS CLOWN SHOW, with BELA HIRELING and his TV PERSONALITY....

*****

It seemed TOO CROOKED to be TRUE. Which was UNDERESTIMATING $CAMH - State Capitalists Advancing Mental Hell....

Carlotta must have got tired pitching MODEL SUITES....
She appeared with Bela on shows sponsored by HELL TELEPHONY.
She was supposed to be researching TELEPHONY and MENTAL HELL....
Looked like she was in CONFLICT.....
Like HELL TELEPHONY was getting an easy ride.....
HELL was paying her.... To talk about WORKPLACE DEPRESSION....

Johnny noticed her predilection for the MIDDLE-CLASS who feel SAD vs. the UTTERLY ABJECT poor.
They called them STATE CAPITALISTS ADVAN CING MENTAL HELL for a REASON....
They weren't telling anyone anything new about MADNESS....
They weren't discussing MOGHULS like CITIZEN HEARSE either....
CITIZEN HEARSE was the BIGGEST CAUSE of WORKPLACE DEPRESSION....
Not to mention the DSM5.... Which they weren't discussing either, because they wrote it with ELI LILLY....
It was like the JOY OF COOKING..... For depression.....
Eli Lilly also made PROZAC, whaich could trigger SUICIDE.....
However Eli Lilly was a BIG DONOR, so Carlotta wouldn't discuss it....
They'd already fired DAVID HEALY for that....
So evidently Carlotta was merely labelling everyone with DEPRESSION, so she could sell them DRUGS for it....
No matter that they could trigger SUICIDE....
He wondered what TRIXIE was doing....
Why wasn't she THERE?! Somebody important.....
Because they weren't!
He wondered if Carlotta ever considered $CAMH propaganda was a major cause of WORKPLACE DEPRESSION, at least if your workplace was a TV set.
Carlotta was depressing.....
Her lies.... Her crookedness....
Johnny wanted to get her fired....

Anti-depressants were depressing.....

He imagined feeling SICK and TIRED of the CORPORATE WORLD, getting DEPRESSED, going on PROZAC, getting SUICIDAL, going to $SCAMH - and finding it owned by it, the hospital one great advertising marquis for CORPORATIONS....
Especially HELL TELEPHONY....

Wasn't that SICK?!

He asked her in a letter.

Carlotta never replied. They were TALKING TO THEMSELVES AGAIN.

Next time he'd watch a movie....

Movie Night? Garbage Night....

*****

Pioneers of Alienation

Every year the propaganda machine got BIGGER....

A MEDIA FUCKOVER orchestrated by $CAMH SUPERSTAR & BAD PHARMA MOUTHPIECE Trixie SANE, with STATE TVO and TORONTO HO-STARS the swilling accomplices. Parroting the SAYINGS of DEAR LEADER SANE. Goodbye Objectivity!

They had so many SHOWS about ANXIETY and DEPRESSION even Johnny got SAD.

STUPID PARENTS on social media worried about RESILIENCE....

BELA's SIDEKICK the Swami accused JOHNNY of being a HIJACKER! For correcting their spelling....

*****

$CAMH was still the WORST WHORE that ever came to THING STREET'S crummy haberdasheries and PIMPS.

Clients sued in small claims courts, to get their change back....

*****

Hey, BELA!

What's it LIKE - to work for BELL $CAMH (State Capitalists ADVANCING Mental Hell?

Or for McCAIN? Or for LABATT? Or for BEAMISH? Or for PFIZER? Or for ELI LILLY? Or for ASTRAZENECA? Or for....

Do you find it - DEPRESSING? STRESSFUL? Maybe KATY can get you some PROZAC (c) - ELI LILLY. Bet she can get you a FIX - right after the SHOW! Don't listen to what that nasty DAVID HEALY has to say - (you can see his SCOTCH TAN even from here - you can READ by it). That could be DEPRESSING....

That was SUICIDAL!

*****

Building the the NEW Bad Pharma SALO on QUEEN WEST....

SCAMH CEO Trixie Zane's NEW KIND of (kinda sortuh?) HOSPITAL. PHARMA PALACE on Thing Street Hogtown. Where HUMAN TRAFFICKING LIVES!

Only NAZIS would name a street through the grounds of a mental hospital FREEDOM STREET - given the strange kind of "freedom" practised by the Casino for Affliction - ADDICTED to bad pharma doping, ECT, emotional manipulation, community treatment orders, propaganda, lying, human trafficking, exploitation even of DEAD CLIENTS, forcible confinement - in other words, COERCION OF ALL KINDS....

Shortly after he bitched about this in a video, the Deflowerment Council got the Waltzing Swaztikas off their collective fat ass and the name was changed. But begged the question - HOW COULD THEY BE SO STUPID?

The street names on the grounds of the old Asylum were STILL an OUTRAGE, not just to mad people - to all people.

White Squirrel WAY? How about WHITE WASH WAY?

Stokes Street? Nobody gave a FUCK about Aldwyn Stokes - a former head of the Clarke Institute (the Shock Shop) - except other SHRINKS and their TOADIES.

Fuck $CAMH - at once totally STUPID - and TOTALLY OFFENCIVE.

NOT an ISOLATED little FAUXPAS. CAMH / $CAMH - from CEO Trixie Zane on down - routinely committed STUPID BLUNDERS re "Mental Illness" - Madness - Clients - Mad People - use what terminology you like....

$CAMH was routinely STUPID not just about the NEIGHBORHOOD but about the WHOLE CULTURE of which it purported to be an INTEGRAL PART....

These were the PEOPLE - the IMPOSTORS, the BULLSHITTERS, the EMOTIONAL MANIPULATORS and LIARS - who said they could TRANSFORM / CURE us.....

This was really ABSURD....

*****

Three of YOU will be schizophrenic!

Thing Street Asylum

The CURE?
See me NEXT year.... We're on the CUSP of a BREAKTHROUGH....
I will come again and I will be millions....

*****

Defeat Denial: he'll drink your beer and steal your meds - but he sure was cute.

Johnny was a fag so the recent travesty of "Mental Illness" by neo-fascist DentsuBOS didn't even SOUND right to him.
All in your BRAIN?!
Like they meant to say - something else - but didn't even have the guts....
Or the balls....
Or the brain....
Like - "it's all in your - ASS?" That was BETTER! FELT BETTER, too....
Unlike the BAD PHARMA BRAIN DISEASE CULT at $CAMH - which always felt BAD, and didn't even WORK....

Nurse could have the meds....

*****

$CAMH and IABC COMMUNICATOR TRIXIE SANE. Motto: Be HERD. Appreciating LIFE'S FINER THINGS. CITRUS SHAMPOO....

******

Thing Street Toronto - the LAND of GROUP HOMES....
MODEL SUITES?!
The one Johnny knew STANK....
Urine, bleach, feet and ASS.

*****

He'd been using the badpharma hashtag for a while - to refer to all the questionable pharmaceuticals that $CAMH was in conflict with.

He watched one of GOLDACRE's TED TALKS. He was ridiculous - like a stand-up comedian doing a white-coater - that's what you had to be to get anyone's attention.
What a point though - so close to HOME....
In EMILE DURKHEIM (all $CAMH clients, all with schizophrenia) THEY - the POISONERS - prided themselves that the atypicals they PUSHED (mainly clozapine and risperidone) while more dangerous (re diabetes, white corpuscles, etc.) were justified because of reduced side-effects - not that they ever NOTICED any reduction THEMSELVES of course - but there wouldn't have been any anyway - because the tests that "proved" the reduced side-effects were RIGGED....
Normal doses of atypicals went up against huge doses of typical psychotics - so of course the results were biased in favour of the atypicals.... all of which, of course, were dangerous, toxic drugs....

It was a BAD PHARMA marketing PLOY....

Clozapine (for one obvious example) had to be monitored with bi-weekly blood tests, appeared to cause dramatic weight gain (related to diabetes - everyone on it was at least pre-diabetic), heart trouble (directly or indirectly), coma if interrupted and not carefully titrated - and DEATH....
He remembered the MANAGER where he worked observing, that - MAYBE IN A HUNDRED YEARS - they'd look BACK on their WORK - PUSHING the MEDS, he meant - as SHEER BARBARITY....
Well, it didn't take a CENTURY....
Johnny didn't have a century.
He didn't have a FUTURE....
He was Precambrian....

Pioneers of Alienation

A coelacanth....
With a good memory....
He knew how to nurse a grudge....
Drop it? Never! He felt he'd been CHEATED by having been made an ACCOMPLICE - a PUSHER, a POISONER, a.... Human Trafficker!

So he had. So THEY - all of THEM, collectively, and $CAMH literally - STILL WERE - POISONERS....

P.S. He DID PUSH - not just by the way. Clients HAD to take these dubious meds - or face homelessness AGAIN....
Where'd he WORK? For EMILE DURKHEIRM HOUSE, right here on THING STREET, PORKDALE, HOGTOWN, DADANIA....

He never got a cut, either!

*****

Johnny got better glasses at Value Village for $1.99 and NOT KNOCK-OFFS, either!

*****

TRANSFORMING LIVES.... CUSP of a BREAKTHROUGH.... PART of the NEIGHBORHOOD....
NEW ERA for MENTAL HELL.... NEW KIND of HOSPITAL.... DEFEAT DENIAL.... McCAIN, LaBATT, BEAMISH, BELL, Eli LILLY, PFIZER, etc....
AND getting PAID nearly a COOL MILLION DOLLARS to be a SLOGANEERING MEDIA FRANKENSTEIN....

*****

They said THE BARRIERS HAD COME DOWN. Max the Butcher sent his goons down Thing Street to check. His wall was still there.
The hipster tea-rooms and art-bars charged an exorbitant cover to hear bad rock band in a gentrified WELFARE HOTEL right across the street from GROUND ZERO.
The NEW FLAMINGO GATEWAY BUILDING looked like the GATEHOUSE at BERGEN-BELSEN - more forbidding than ever!
THING STRING was an over-priced STRIP MALL where real artists couldn't afford to shop, let alone live.
They were POPULATION DOCTORS. Like MENGELE....
They were not a PART OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD or even the SAME MORAL UNIVERSE, but the THE NEIGHBORHOOD was CHANGING....
Soon they would be ALL of it....
He wasn't aware of any CONTRACT between them. Someone had SIGNED for him. Someone had FORMED him!
WHO?
They called streets WAYS. WHITE SQUIRREL WAY. WORKMAN WAY. When they weren't being quaint it was STOKES STREET, FREEDOM STREET.
A REVOLUTION? They could start it without him....

But what kind of REVOLUTION could they have expected, from a MOUTHPIECE and a MEDIA CONSTRUCT, paid nearly $700,000 annually - to front for the worst interests of "Mental Hell" - BAD PHARMA and BRAIN DISEASE QUACKERY - while spouting bromides - that we were HUMAN, that we LIKED SHAMPOO (CITRUS especially).....
A CARE PROVIDER? Keep telling yourself, Chatty. "Methinks the LADY protests TOO MUCH"....
"Mental Hell" NOT SEPARATE FROM HEALTH CARE? Then what WAS all the BULLSHIT really ABOUT, Chatty? WAS there ANY OTHER FIELD where YOU could GET AWAY with THIS?

We're HUMAN?! And the BEST INDICATION? We LIKE CITRUS SHAMPOO?!

A LIE!

*****

Another LIE

Or a JOKE?! This time from the Mendacious HOstar.

It was impossible to imagine a worse communicator re "Mental Hellness".....

*****

Emotional Manipulation. Exploiting Suicide. Exploiting the DEAD!

Trolling for CELEBRITY SUICIDE? We get more visits....
The only MOVEMENT Johnny saw? What comes out your ASS!

*****

Take A TRIP to MaRS DISCOVERY DISTRICT. BAD PHARMA, BRAIN DISEASE and EUGENICS....

O, Ilse! TREURNICHT!

These were the people CAMH CEO Trixie Zane "partnered" with....
When you were the CEO of CAMH - Casino for Affliction and Mental Hell Toronto - you couldn't hang out with just ANYBODY....

*****

The NEW $CAMH PHARMA PALACE (Q-) BALL PARK. Where HUMAN TRAFFICKING LIVES!

A few days ago there was a great FLURRY of activity at the CAMH hashtag, all about how much they LOVED the TORONTO BLUEJAYS.
Only the people LIKING them - apart from a few autograph hounds - were mainly their own employees - mainly PR people - a few $CAMH PR department hangers-on - and (of course) the BLUEJAYS themselves.
He wondered - WHY? Even IF a lot of clients LOVED the JAYS - which didn't appear to be the case - why make such a point of SAYING so? After all - if they loved the JAYS - they could speak for themselves. But maybe they didn't't - because they really didn't like ANYTHING that much - least of all the FUCKING BLUEJAYS....
So WHY? It was the same SCHTICK all over again. Telling them they were REMOVING STIGMA while RESTIGMATIZING them ALL OVER AGAIN. Like Trixie Zane and the CBC's Shelagh Rogers - the original STIGMA SISTERS bearing GIFTS of LIGHT (footie pajamas and citrus shampoo)....
One of their FAVORITE ways they did this - was by TELLING THEM WHAT THEY LIKED: whether it was stupid SHELAGH ROGERS with her benighted GIFTS OF LIGHT or mendacious CAMH CEO Trixie Zane insulting them by telling them they were HUMAN (like it's NEWS) and that the indication of their HUMANITY was - guess what? - their predilection for....
CITRUS SHAMPOO....
Then $CAMH FOUNDATION chipped in with the BLUEJAYS.... But WHY? Aha!

The BLUEJAYS CEO hung out with the $CAMH FOUNDATION CEO - with Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre - "NEW ERA" Weasel-Theatre herself - and sat on the FOUNDATION BOARD - they were ONE. So it was FREE ADVERTISING, PHOTO OPS for MILLIONAIRE JOCKS....

Probably even TAX WRITE-OFFS....

In the CRAZY HOUSE always awash in fucking stupid BLUEJAYS TICKETS. Couldn't give them away. How he met Deane, who suicided. Could thank BEESTON for that much. Broke and trying to sell his shit on the lawn next door and Deane threw him a ream - of worthless BLUEJAYS tickets!
Clients had better things to do in the evening than watch a bunch of millionaires wack off (so to speak).
However - the REAL BALL GAME's NOT OVER HERE - (it never is) - it's OVER THERE - with $CAMH and MARS DISCOVERY DISTRICT and TED TURNER (who owns the BLUEJAYS, and BEESTON too) and the CORPORATIONS and - especially - the PHARMACEUTICALS....
It wasn't BASEBALL - it was ASYLUM BALL....

Q-BALL - made with COKE and SEROQUEL (quetiapine) compliments of MARS DISCOVERY DISTRICT BOARD MEMBER ELAINE CAMPBELL'S ASTRAZENECA....

The BadPHARMA FOLKS $CAMH SUPERSTAR Trixie Zane really PLAYS BALL with.....

They're obviously haveing a BALL - an ASYLUM BALL... Black Market for AstraZeneca's SEROQUEL: The REAL Q-BALL GAME....

He was orbidly fascinated by the connection between AstraZeneca's illegal marketing of Seroquel for things like anxiety and sleeplessness, and its becoming a dangerous street drug. It continued, in urban drug treatment centres, to be prescribed for the uses that AZ illegally marketed it for - and paid a token half billion dollar fine for. The users, with their off-label prescriptions, dealt the stuff on the street.

He wondered if Zane's friends at AZ did some math - fine vs. sales to the street (where their legal shit is combined with illegal coke and even smack etc) - and figured they'd come out ahead. The head of AZ Canada sat on the board of the MaRS group that Zane and $CAMH partnered with.

Was there no difference between a PUSHER and a PHARMACEUTICAL? The pusher was ultimately ethical - because at some point - maybe all along - he faced consequences - and paid them. Half a billion - to AstraZENECA - wasn't consequences!

They were having a Q-BALL....

MORE than a FEW.... Looks LIKE....

*****

Right in the PALM of her GREEDY LITTLE BIG BAD PHARMA HAND....

Butch - Mad Pride Toronto organizer - threatened to storm Thing Street. Having lived on it for 20 years, Johnny looked sourly on parvenu thugs trying to shake him down for a fix.

Butch pretended to be a Mad Pride activist. So if he had to storm something - why not storm $CAMH - even CRITICIZING them was better than NOTHING - which was about what Butch and his colleagues at MAD PRIDE (TVO Poster Boy Max the Butcher et al) were in terms of activism - WORSE than NOTHING - a DISTRACTION from the real issue - HUMAN TRAFFICKING at the Casino for Affliction and Mental Hell....

White Slavery....

Butch, MAD PRIDE ORGANIZER - ACTIVIST - WORKED for $CAMH. In the COMMUNICATIONS department, no less.

Didn't everyone?!

Was that WHY he never criticized them? Other $CAMH employees DID....

A therapeutic milieu unit was a lousy bedroom, an interngenerational wellness centre was a gymnasium at CLUB MEDS, transforming lives was conning a few LIVE ONES, the NEW KIND OF HOSPITAL was a NARCO ASYLUM (at best) no better than PLACEBO but usually a LOT WORSE with SIDE-EFFECTS, the NEW ERA for MENTAL HELLNESS of CAMH CEO TRIXIE SANE and CAMH Foundation CEO Vixen Foxy WEASEL-THEATRE was the 4TH REICH of DRUG-BASED HUMAN TRAFFICKING....

MANCHURIA....

Last (for now) but definitely NOT LEAST - $CAMH SUPERSTAR Trixie Zane, touted by various corporate entities as - Communicator of the Year - Nuanced Crusader - Catalaytic Innovator - was nothing but a MENDACIOUS MOUTHPIECE and EMOTIONAL MANIPULATOR for the WORST interests of the Mental Hell INDUSTRY and had already in her short, unhappy REIGN at $CAMH done more damage to MAD PEOPLE than the PROTO-NAZI C.K. Clarke achieved in a lifetime of scare-mongering gangsterism....

Johnny knew there would never be a transformation at $CAMH, so long as Trixie reigned. They NEEDED a CEO who offered at least a degre of critical objectivity vis a vis all the ubiquitous bad drugs and worse hardware. They did NOT need another literary sex worker with a degree in Women's Studies cohabiting with her Psychiatrist-in-Chief in Emile Durkheim's Twinned Tower, frequenting Porkdale Thing Stores for used fanbacks and other objets d'art, swigging beer at Larry's, etc....

Butch! - even OTHER $CAMH employees SAID this - because it was the truth - even an UNDERSTATEMENT of the TRUTH - but NOT YOU, NOT MADPRIDE....

Heaven forbid that a lousy, smelly, MAD PARKDALE STUMBLEBUM like JOHNNY - should ever presume to tell a SALARIED $CAMH EMPLOYEE his JOB - but BUTCH? What WAS his JOB - anyway?

Thing Street Asylum

Butch - why didn't you complain (again) to your NURSE FRIEND at ARCHWAY CLINIC that Johnny asked TOO MANY QUESTIONS - he'd probably have wanted to ask you the SAME THING....

$CAMH must have paid DENTSU a lot of money to come up with their so-called "DEFEAT DENIAL" scampaign - based on their own false premises - lies - and contempt for the public....

Their main lie was that the way THEY SAID we saw "mental illness" really WAS the way we saw it.

Certainly, it wasn't the way everyone saw it.

It wasn't the way Johnny saw it.

It wasn't the way anyone Johnny knew sees it.

Maybe, just maybe t was the way $CAMH and its condescendingly stupid FASCIST PR FIRM saw it.

Yes, probably. Very likely....

Want to really defeat denial? Say $CAMH - where HUMAN TRAFFICKING LIVES!

And he was CRAZIER than EVER....

And BUTCH still wouldn't let him join MAD PRIDE, because Johnny was MORE ANTPSYCHIATRIC THAN EVER, TOO....

True, he wanted to see $CAMH SUPERSTAR Trixie Zane FIRED -

For misleading them that "mental illness" and "madness" - use whatever inadequate term one would - were brain diseases, when there wasn't any proof....

For stigmatising and scare-mongering, as when she stated that 3 audience members at one of her (deplorable) TED talks would be "schizophrenic"....

For rhetorical fallacy - specifically "inadequate sample" or - in other words - statistical rubbish....

For scare-mongering, brandishing the word - SCHIZOPHRENIA - as if were the KISS of DEATH, the PROPHECY of DOOM, the VERY WORST thing you could EVER be LABELLED with....

For emotional manipulation with with her SUICIDE EXPLOITATION SCAM, when for a small donation payable in monthly installments she offered to SAVE WARFARIN from throwing himself under the wheels of the onrushing Thing Car....

For conflict of interest and collusion with the manufacturers of antidepressants with which she kept Warfarin well-supplied, anticipating the day when the public would tire of keeping him alive and sooner pay for him dead....

For misleading the public by claiming to be "on the cusp of a breakthrough" - when after all her lies and deceptions it would take them decades just to get back to reality, before they could begin to think of transforming it.....

For being greedy (that $700,000 salary, etc.)....

For being unscientific (see above)....

For being a LOUSY communicator (see ALL of the above)....

For being insulting and stigmatising (as when she declared they were HUMAN BEINGS because they LIKED CITRUS SHAMPOO - hadn't she anything BETTER to say for $700,000 a year?)....

For being the FACE OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING at $CAMH - processing and reprocessing people - many of them vulnerable and even abject - not to cure or even to care for them but mainly to charge them FEES and to SELL them DRUGS - most of which - maybe all - were no better than PLACEBO - in other words - DIDN'T WORK....

For being a SUPERSTAR....

For dickering with Johnny over the price of ugly fanbacks....

For never picking up her things....

For bothering him for Romeo's phone number....

For making him kick her out of his store....

For telling Romeo she thought Johnny was WEIRD....

How was THAT, POSTERBOYS?

Something you'd expect to hear spewing from the mouths of $CAMH inmates on Thing Street....

Only there weren't any....

They were OUT....

Meanwhile letters came for Krakpotkin, demanding that he compensate the Cartel for all the trouble he'd caused them by getting arrested for stealing their Sleepeeze (c). Johnny told him to ignore them, it was a scam. Krakpotkin was afraid his father hadn't bought them off after all. He'd sold him down the river....

Down Thing Street....

Pioneers of Alienation

*****

BUTCH! Mad Pride Poster Boy! Volunteering to STORM the STREETS!
He WORKED for THEM! Co-opted!

MAX the BUTCHER! Mental Hell Poster Boy! Hated the M word (MAD).
Didn't like CRAZY Either....

*****

All they had to do was work in one of their own group-homes for a year. That experience would help them to cut at least some of their propaganda about transforming lives and new eras for "Mental Hell" (yes, the 4th Reich!).

$CAMH SUPERSTAR Trixie Zane looked GREAT with a PLUMBER'S SNAKE. SEXY - and she WORKED WONDERS with one, TOO....

It should have been her caduceus, but it was Johnny's....

They should have tried to live for a few weeks on Thing Street, in Ground Zero's Welfare Hotel (if it hadn't been converted to condos yet), on Odious Pee....

Even THAT experience wouldn't have helped the hard-core $CAMHeads - C. Lamprini Eel (Hagiographer ROYALE of the SHARKE INSTITUTE - in LOVE WITH The KILLUH!) tried to live on welfare for a few weeks in the 70s, to prove - who the FUCK knew WHAT, really - that welfare wasn't really so bad because he could be on WELFARE and STILL be the MARVELLOUS C. Lamprini Eel(?!).

They just didn't get the difference between their EXPERIMENTS and REALITY....

Johnny was an experiment that did NOT work out....

C. Lamprini Eel was a FREAK in his own DIME MUSEUM....

*****

She'd never be able to get another job after THIS gig - she'd be WASHED UP as a CLINICIAN after standing up before a room full of people (inadequate sample!) and proclaiming that three of them would be SCHIZOPHRENIC.....

Ah, WISHFUL THINKING! They were BETTER than CATS - at landing on all four - right in the FEEDER....

*****

Certainly No TASTE! Also no DIGNITY or RESPECT! and THESE PEOPLE wanted to CURE him....

Sick Kids was in "partnership" with $CAMH and WalMART (!) - and it really SHOWED - in their collusion with Big Pharma, their fondness for drugging children (in France there's virtually NO SUCH THING as ADHD - how come?), their tasteless moneygrubbing GREED, and their CALLOUS DISREGARD for the people they pretended to want to CURE....

For Johnny, especially....

$CAMH and SICK KIDS were into it - for the money. Whether your kids were LGBT or straight, underweight, overweight, accident-prone, internet-prone, sad, depressed, suicidal, young or old - or just bad drivers - there might not be be any hope, but there was always plenty of DOPE....

$CAMH and SICK KIDS!

They were after THE KIDS!

Sean the Kidd! CAT spells COGNITIVE ADAPTATION TRAINING....

Wasn't that a PLAGIARISM of Cognitive Behavior Therapy?

RESILIENCE was THEFT!

*****

Thing Street Asylum

BIG TONY! $CAMH Schizophrenia SCIENTIST. Hates SMOKING! Doesn't Mind *CHAMPIX (c) (suicidality)....

*****

Ranting by Butch CAMH employee AND Mad Pride Toronto ORGANISER - IMAGINE - another reason WHY it's $CAMH....
AND another reason why MAD PRIDE was merely a CASTRATED version of the SURVIVOR MOVEMENT....
Mad Pride WITHOUT ANTI-PSYCHIATRY?
MACRAME!

*****

The HIGH COST of Being A $CAMH TVO Mad PRIDE POSTER BOY!
$132,000!
Sure BEATS Odious Pee Though....

That's SOME MELON, BOSS!

Mad PRIDE?! Doesn't like CRAZY either. Which is HARDLY SURPRISING.....

One GOOD QUISLING DESERVES ANOTHER....

*****

SCAMH CEO Trixie Zane! Part of the Neighborhood?!
So was AUSCHWITZ...

NEW KIND OF HOSPITAL?!
A CASINO! For MENTAL HELL!

The (BUG) HOUSE always WON!

*****

Glasses by HAKIM!

*****

Neighbourhoods that gentrified were populated by avant-garde artists and the creativity that came with boldnes, said Trixie Zane.

THING STREET was populated by YUPPIES - and $CAMHeads - like HERSELF - on fat salaries they got for lying to him, for BAD PHARMA friends on the benighted SUNSHINE list....
They called it that because it shed daylight on the transformers, the scammers....
What they really did for it remained somewhat SHADY....
Neighbourhoods gentrified the GENTLE JANE way became uninhabitable for bold artists because they couldn't afford to live in them. They were inhabited by posers running pretentious state-funded clip-joints on Thing Street, opposite the Drug Mart where Thing Street Asylum had been....
Trixie Zane needed a new PR firm. Had FASCIST DENTSU done this one, too? They loved to personify abstractions - like CREATIVITY - so they could COMMIT them to their NEW KIND of HOSPITAL - as if they had a monopoly on IDEALS....
It was their TOTALITARIAN MIND-SET....
The vacant sun-baked parkette became a MAGIC MOUNTAIN where TRANS FORMATION lived with his siblings, CREATIVITY and BOLDNESS....
It was WHERE HUMAN TRAFFICKING LIVED - where she stigmatized everyone so she could drug them into SLAVERY with her BAD PHARMA poisons....

ZONCOLITE....
POEMFORTHEDAY....
Processed by corrupt PHARMACEUTICALS like AstraZENECA and Pfizer and GlaxoSmithKline (to name but a few) whose SUNSHINE LIST CEOs she SLEPT with over at MaRS DISCOVERY DISTRICT....

*****

He knew - $CAMH SUPERSTAR Trixie Zane said stupid things and LIED a LOT. It was pathological. She was sick....
So he thought he'd give her a second chance.

He went to White Squirrel Way. He stepped onto the sidewalk. He walked UP the sidewalk....
He did NOT feel PART OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD, which might have been just as well, the NEIGHBOURHOOD being entirely OVER-PRICED BUTT-UGLY CONDOS and CLIP-JOINT GALLERIES with a few former WELFARE HOTELS converted to ART BARS....
But it WASN'T - because $CAMH was EVEN WORSE - MUCH WORSE....

He did NOT feel welcome, which in a way was just as well, too - he didn't want to feel WELCOME in a DEAD ZONE - which is what it was.
He was surrounded by ugly glass and concrete buildings - typical CORPORATE MUSSOLINI - glinting in the hot sun across a parched vacant lot. There were obnoxious "NO SMOKING" signs everywhere, and street signs with the names of long dead and deservedly forgotten SHRINKS.

High above, in monumentally large letters, was a sign reading HELL GATEWAY BUILDING - HELL being a notoriously obnoxious and monopolistic entity, GATEWAY to HELL, he thought....
BIG BEEFY SECURITY GOONS started BARKING at him "SIR! SIR!" - he knew it was bad when some $CAMH NAZI HIRELING called HIM sir - so he kept going.

Part of the NEIGHBORHOOD? So was AUSCHWITZ....

(As for her token CAFÉ job - she should've tried it HERSELF. SHE WOULDN'T HAVE CUT IT....
She could SHOVE it!)

CAMH CEO Trixie Zane and the PHARMA FASCISTS (including their FASCIST PR FIRM DENTSU / DENTSUBOS - had already shut down the twitter account linking to his material.

Not surprising, considering what CAMH / $CAMH was really all about - but disappointing re twitter, who had collaborated with the PHARMA FASCISTS over a trumped-up misdemeanor - who had - in effect - SOLD OUT....
To collaborate with the FASCISTS, was to be one.

*****

Twitter cracked down, ostensibly because Johnny was running several accounts simultaneously.
Apparently those AUSTERE FUCKS at TWITTER had a RULE against this - although $CAMH did it ROUTINELY - maintaining numerous accounts under various CORPORATE FRONTS, and concealing the practise - as much as possible - byPROTECTING their retweets - making it difficult for outsiders to know that $CAMH was mainly just RETWEETING ITSELF....
Obscene wasn't it? The $CAMH COMMUNICATIONS equivalent of MASTURBATION....

Crows twittering on the same frequency....
Hearse-Ferrari's Trotskyite Hippie vision....
Love?!
Dullness, and the ultimate dullness....
A metaphor for the internet less day-dream than living nightmare - a real-life fascist fairy-tale of totalitarian accord....
Twittering the same thing....
Talking to THEMSELVES AGAIN....

DEATH!

Thing Street Asylum

*****

CAMH SUPERSTAR Trixie Zane, IABC BULLSHITTER of the CENTURY.
Be HERD!

Whenever the PHARMA FASCISTS wanted to look like they were DOING SOMETHING - like discovering the CAUSE of SCHIZOPHRENIA - their favourite PET PROJECT and HOBBY-HORSE - a REAL MONEY-MAKER like CANCER CAN BE BEATEN - and they'd ONLY been at it for 150 years - and most of those years - on the CUSP of a BREAKTHROUGH - as their DEAR LEADER TRIXIE SANE was FOND of REPEATING AD NAUSEAM -
They had their TOADIES and HANGERS-ON retweet the BIG ANNOUNCEMENT - as if their ADORING PUBLIC were GRATEFULLY APPLAUDING their ANTICS - as if THE WHOLE WORLD really WAS WATCHING - when of course it really didn't GIVE a FUCK -
Especially NOT about a gang of LOUSY DRUG TRAFFICKERS like $CAMH. Which was ALL that was REALLY going on - $CAMH applauding $CAMH for trying to look like SOMETHING OTHER than a DRUG CARTEL.

Of course, this was deceptive - extremely so - part of their larger scam to EMOTIONALLY MANIPULATE and DEFRAUD them of BILLIONS - much more deceptive than a private citizen running several accounts in a DESPERATE EFFORT to be HEARD (as the IABC likes to say, but doesn't MEAN - for THEM it's TO BE "HERD") - to be HEARD at ALL - above the DIN of CEO Zane's CONSTANT IN(S)ANE CHEERLEADING.

Too BAD about $CAMH - worse, MUCH WORSE about TWITTER and TWITTER'S Hazel Lytle - for the OBVIOUS DOUBLE STANDARD.
To COLLABORATE with FASCISTS - was to be one. Shame on you TWITTER, for putting yourself RIGHT UP THERE - or rather DOWN THERE - with Pizza Baroness McCain and the BELL (HELL) Telephone Company and LaBATT and BEAMISH and the whole BAD PHARMA GANG - as just another $CAMH HUMAN TRAFFICKING CLIENT.

*****

HEIL PHARMA! HEIL $CAMH! NEW ERA Weasel-Theatre and her PROPAGANDA MACHINE!

NEW ERA for Mental Hell! NEW KIND of (Sort of?) HOSPITAL! AUSCHWITZ PHARMAPALACE....

Aliens from MaRS Discovery District....

GUESS WHO?!

SCAMH CEO Trixie SANE of course!

*****

Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre became $CAMH's answer to DR. GOEBBELS when she rose to become CEO of the $CAMH FOUNDATION (their money-grubbing propaganda division) - after a gig pimping for ART in OTTAWA (which made her an EXPERT on Mental Hell).
The MOUTHPIECE of a MOUTHPIECE (CAMH CEO Trixie Zane, IABC Bullshitter, MOUTHPIECE of BAD PHARMA HUMAN TRAFFICKING, etc.) - she's good at announcing A NEW ERA FOR Mental Hell, every time some RICH DOWAGER - or RICH IDIOT - M'LADY Margareat McCAIN - gave her a few MILLION.
NEW ERA FOR Mental Hell? That could only mean - THE FOURTH REICH!

*****

DEFEAT DENIAL: It's BROTHER BLANCHARD of the CULT of BRAIN DISEASE. GAY? TOO MANY BROTHERS....

$CAMH BAD SCIENCE. Always so COCK-sure, which NO REAL SCIENTIST EVER IS: Bearman and Brückner (2008) argue that studies showing a fraternal birth order effect have used nonrepresentative samples and/or indirect reports on siblings' sexual orientation. Their analysis, focusing on opposite-sex twins, did not find an association between same-sex attraction and number of older siblings, older brothers, or older sisters.
- From "WIKI"

Pioneers of Alienation

Abstract: By 2007, CAMH's Ken Zucker had been widely exposed as a trans-reparatist who claimed to be able to cure gender variant children, while CAMH's Ray Blanchard openly ridiculed transsexual women as being men without penises. The resulting outrage all across the transgender community became so intense that CAMH launched a study to consider the complaints. The study led to stinging indictments of CAMH's gender clinics and made well-reasoned recommendations on how to alleviate the problems. In response, Zucker and Blanchard have if anything intensified their ongoing 'war on transgenders', and are now apparently engaging in a war within CAMH to sidestep the recommendations of the study.
-Full article: The WAR WITHIN CAMH

Blanchard was "into" PENILE PLETHYSMOGRAPHY?! Or VICE VERSA?!

His own sexual preferences remained something of a mystery - considering his interest in Johnny's - it didn't seem unfair to wonder....

Penile plethysmography (PPG), or "phallometry", refered to measurement of bloodflow to Johnny's DICK.

The most commonly reported methods of conducting penile plethysmography involved the measurement of the circumference of the penis with a mercury-in-rubber or electromechanical strain gauge, or the volume of the penis with an airtight cylinder and inflatable cuff at the base of the penis. Corpus cavernosa nerve penile plethysmographs measure changes in response to inter-operative electric stimulation during surgery. The volumetric procedure was invented by Kurt Freund and is considered to be particularly sensitive at low arousal levels. The easier to use circumferential measures are more widely used, however, and more common in studies using erotic film stimuli.
- From WIKI

It almost mad him HARD!

*****

Some wannabe URBAN PLANNER defended the beauties of THING STREET of which $CAMH was now an especially PROMINENT PART.
It ALL looked like MENTAL HELL....

Jane Jacobs Jr.? Albert Speer the 2nd?

Lauded BELL and $CAMH for "working tirelessly" to END STIGMA. Thought it was great that poor people didn't have any cheap places to live - thanks to TRIXIE SANE and $CAMH gentrification....

Even the TWIN TOWERS got a MAKE OVER....

Even GROUND ZERO was TRANSFORMED....

STIGMATISED such accommodations as CRACK DENS for PROSTITUTES.

Definitely the PARTY LINE of the PHARMAFASCISTS - fuck the poor, and drug them after, while whoring for the middle class - even though he knew, living in a WELFARE HOTEL himself, there weren't any crack dens and - as for PROSTITUTION - poor people scarcely had a MONOPOLY on THAT, now did THEY....

Johnny couldn't think of ANYTHING more STIGMATISING than $CAMH and HELL TALKYPHONE - just walking up mis-named WHITE SQUIRREL WAY - you knew when they laid it on thick like that, they were LYING - was stigmatizing enough, then all the signs telling you not to smoke, warning you that if you were an ANIMAL you won't be served....
Johnny had some INSIGHT. He KNEW! He WAS an ANIMAL! He would NOT be SERVED!....
And the streets named after DEAD SHRINKS he hadnn't even heard of because he was so stupid and ignorant - but he was expected to WORSHIP ANYWAY....

It was all too FUCKING TOO STIGMATISING....

But the so-called New Flamingo GATEWAY building was WORSE - The PHARMAFASCIST MUSSOLINI - GATEWAY to BAD PHARMA HELL.

Maybe some people liked it - felt AT HOME in the corporate head-quarters of a DRUG CARTEL....

Thing Street Asylum

Even Charles Manson had FOLLOWERS....

But HELL TALKYPHONE was stigmatizing in subtler, ever worse ways, which $CAMH enabled and COLLUDED with - its WORKPLACE Mental Hell series - for one example - STIGMATISING unhappy WORKING STIFFS so $CAMH could DRUG THEM - and HELL and HELL's fellow corporatists engendered more than a little UNHAPPINESS - as did $CAMH itself come to think of it (ask any NURSE - at least after he'd had a few - ask DEANE!).

But NOTHING was more stigmatizing than $CAMH. No such thing as mental LLNESS, but definitely MENTAL HELLNESS! To stigmatize people as ILL was false and hypocritical given that there was NO SUCH THING thing as an ILLNESS in the entire DSM.

There was sure a lot of HELL though....

No PROOF in the DSM either....

Johnny was the PROOF. He used to be a PROF....

*****

CAMH CEO Trixie Zane made BAD SCIENCE, BAD PR,BAD COMMUNICATIONS, but
THEY gave her a PRIZE, the "IABC ("International Association of Business Communicators").
COMMUNICATOR of the YEAR! Rigged? YOU BET!

Four people elected her at The Flake Boutique Motel.

$CAMH TOUTED as SCIENCE what was merely a FUNDRAISING PLOY - in other words - BAD SCIENCE - half-baked and UNTESTED.

Yet, according to CAMH SUPERSTAR Trixie Zane - they were ON THE CUSP OF A BREAKTHROUGH and this gave Johnny EVERY REASON TO BE HOPEFUL....
WRONG - on BOTH COUNTS.

NOWHERE NEAR a breakthrough - not even in the same the same GALAXY - certainly not on THING STREET....

BUT if they HAD been, it would have been a REASON TO DESPAIR....

*****

LIES LIES LIESS!
Drop a HOUSE on her....

*****

STUFF it IN!

*****

$CAMH CEO Trixie Zane disgraced herself, $CAMH, clients, and all the PEOPLE - she had to GO!
$CAMH didn't value TRUTH or respect it - or HEALTH - just MONEY!
$CAMH SUPERSTAR Trixie Zane made $700,000 plus a year fronting for the PHARMAFASCISTS saying Johnny was a HUMAN BEING (!) because he liked CITRUS SHAMPOO....
Well, Johnny said - he was a DOG - because he liked BONES BETTER....

He was HARD....

*****

Pioneers of Alienation

Dentsu was HATED in JAPAN - and wherever people valued truth.

Timbuktu! Not Constantinople!

*****

CRAM it IN!

*****

$CAMH CEO Trixie Zane - The IABC's answer to DR. GOEBBELS - BE HERD - FACE of PHARMAFASCISM - MOUTHPIECE for HUMANTRAFFICKING - presented her DENTSU SLIDESHOW....

It belonged in C. Clamoring Eel's Dime Mueum. It was going back, after the Road Show....

She presented the way nobody on THING STREET talked about MENTAL HELLNESS - but DENTSU FASCISTS said they DID and repeated on SOLD-OUT MEDIA - all of which was owned by $CAMH or $CAMH SPONSORS - by CITIZEN HEARSE in FACT....

A candid shot of Jah Lo See in Sunday Pharmacist Drag, poker-faced like she was about to start screaming. Johnny gave her a copy of his flyer, because he thought she was ONE OF THEM. Like at any moment she'd start shouting too. She had a certificate from Thing Street Asylum. SHE was SANE! It SAID so! Right HERE....

A mug-shot of MAX THE BUTCHER up against the wall complaining in a querulous psch-survivor termolo cracking like an adolescent choir-boy's. They weren't JUST A BUNCH OF WHINERS....

An action-shot of Johnny and Porko delivering the mail, that Trixie'd unearthed in the archives of M.F.I. They were not FUCKING IDIOTS however. At least they grunted like PIGS....

A double-portrait of MAX THE BUTCHER and CRAZY JANE JACOBS proving THEY don't ALL LOOK LIKE GORILLAS. Jane was obviously an ourangatang....

It wasn't always merely their fervent imagination confronted a DADANIAN PACIFIER LOCOMOTIVE, was the point of an old engraving she'd discovered (foxed and worn) in Lamprini Eel's DIME MUSEUM, depicting a visibily pregnant Victorian (woman) flinging herself under the wheels of the on-rushing Night Scotsman. Whalebone, lappets, and guts....

A file-photo from the Police Gazette of Marek Finkelburgher telling Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre he didn't want THING STREET ASYLUM (that old INSANE ASYLUM). He wanted the BOOK about it! He wanted her to STEAL IT.....

An illustration from an essay in MENTAL HYGIENE TIMES by C.K. Sharke about HIGH=GRADE MORON S, DEFECTIVE IMMIGRANTS, SECRET MASTURBATORS and FEEBLE-MINDED WOMEN....

LIES, LIES, LIES - from the FOLKS who SPUN the FUKUSHIMA DISASER - "Support JAPAN by EATING" RADIOACTIVE FOOD - Their POSTERBOY got RADIATION SICKNESS on LIVE (?) TV....

A NEW LOW for FASCISM? No....

The $CAMH "trinity" - CAMH CEO Trixie Zane, the $700,000 PHARMAFASCIST & BRAIN DISEASE MOUTHPIECE, former CEO "Uncle Paul" GARFINKEL (the stooge who fired David Healy for speaking up against ELI LILLY suicidality), and "Pretty Boy" Kwame McKenzie - who fronted for them with his good buddy Steve Paikin ("Bela Hireling") over at STATE TVO....

*****

DEFEAT DENIAL?! We need a NEW CEO at $CAMH. NOT a $700,000 plus MOUTHPIECE for the WORST INTERSTS of so-called Mental Hell....

There was a rhetorical fallacy known as the dilemma question - like "when are you gonna stop beating your wife." Maybe Johnny didn't even HAVE a wife - because - maybe - he was a FAG....

To criminal organizations like DENTSU an insignificant detail and highly undesirable at best....

The bullshitter asks you a question based on an implied premise - in this case, that Johnny was "denying something" and that the "something" he was denying was talking about "mental ILLness" THIS way.

Johnny never talked about "mental hellness" THAT way - THEY only never about "mental illness" - when he didn't put quotes around "mental illness" it was because he was TIRED of TYPING them.

He didn't know ANY people who talked about "mental illness" THAT way - except THEMSELVES....

Thing Street Asylum

Rhetorical fallacies and psychological trickery - the NEW KIND OF HOSPITAL....

A mediaconstruct....

Bad drugs.... Worse hardware....

Brain-disease COSTCO....

P.S. Johnny was GLAD to see $CAMH EMPLOYEES Butch (Mad Pride Toronto Organiser?!) and DEANE were reading his posts - but their time would have been better spent - going to AA! They NEEDED EACH OTHER, too!

Heil $CAMH!

*****

Stuff it in!

*****

He decided they'd watch a movie. There were advantages to watching one together. Like Desperate Living. They could sit on the same side of the room, facing the monitor. This presented opportunities for touching. Johnny wasn't disappointed. He carefully arranged everything in advance.

He usually arranged everything anyway. He didn't want DEANE to have to buy beer, when he was working. On $CAMH's dime, he'd say. DEANE would wrap the cans in an envelope for inter-office mail, and stash them in the fridge in the staff-room.

Didn't somebody say something about Mental Hell and ADDICTIONS?

They'd have been idiots not to know what was in the envelope, but they thought it was SODA for PIZZA NITE.

Unless DEANE exhausted their envelopes (they were always hard-up), he'd never be able to bring more than a few cans at once....

Pizza was even more awkward. So Johnny took care of that too, and it was cheap.

Setting up the movie was fun. It was setting DEANE up. He could almost feel him, as he moved his chair from the other end of the room and placed it beside DEANE's, as close as he dared. The pay-off!

DEANE wrinkled his nose. He smelled Johnny's "New Balance" © runners. Johnny's PRODUCT PLACEMENT. They didn't smell like PIZZA. They smelled like a morgue.

It was HIM....

They really were off a corpse. He bought them from WORTHLESS WORLD. For 5 bucks. DEANE was impressed.

DEANE offered Johnny a little black and white TV. He wanted to know. How much was it worth? Thinking of the THING STORE, but since the THING STORE everything was WORTHLESS....

Romeo picked everything up off the field, after the auction. For FREE. Including his girl-friends....

When Johnny gave DEANE something, DEANE wanted to know how much JOHNNY was WORTH. He should have known he was worth even less....

Johnny said, keep it baby. Just give me a pair of your old runners. You don't have to wash them first.

He never gave him the runners though. Maybe by then he was on to Johnny's PARAPHILIA.

Instead, he enthused over the "New Balance" © runners. Johnny showed him where he'd bled into the heel, because he ran sockless and it hurt his foot. DEANE said he used to go sockless too; that was what happened, when you didn't use socks. DEANE wore brand-name Addidas © socks. With the swoosh.

Johnny reached down, as if to feel DEANE's sock, but touched his cock instead. It felt cold. It was hard. DEANE said he was out of clean socks. His nigger was in the Philippines. With Marek Finkelburgher.

Pioneers of Alienation

*****

In fairness to DEANE, even DEANE didn't WANT to work for $CAMH any more. Their totalitarian bullshit, while under-funding even the modest front-line services DEANE helped provide, alienated DEANE and most of his colleagues, mainly conservative, medical model adherents. Soon only C. Lamprini EEL, Schizophrenia CAPO, would love $CAMH. He didn't like CIGGIES, but he LOVED CHAMPIX ©....

Johnny's experience with DEANE merely confirmed what he'd suspected all along, that only the WORST fools, liars, CREEPS, SCOUNDRELS and ASS-HOLES would WANT to work for $CAMH, and in fairness to DEANE, that's what his BOSSES were....

Also, in fairness to DEANE, Johnny had to admit, not that it wouldn't have occurred to everyone already, Johnny had a THING for DEANE. He didn't care about the beer, although DEANE'S adherence to the MEDICAL MODEL really BOTHERED him, because he was just trying to get him drunk so he could fuck him. After all, he WAS Johnny's TYPE. He wanted to take him UP THE ASS....

His favorite memory was one Monday DEANE came over. Short-shorts and Hawaian shirt, as usual. Johnny caught a whiff of something at the door. He remembered. Sunday was his time. DEANE hadn't shaved or showered after, because he still smelled like SEED.

Dr. EEL's latest slogan summed it all up nicely: DEFEAT DENIAL: It's ALL IN YOUR.... HEAD, er.... BRAIN, er.... I know.... - your ASS!!! They'd finally got something right....

*****

Stuff it in! Cram it in!

*****

They had everything at Thing Street. A city within a city within a city, like Chinese boxes. Everything virtual, nothing real. They had a Virtual Vegas, a Virtual Thing Street. They banned smoking, but no doubt they'd re-introduce it, as research, with virtual cigarettes and smoking rooms.

It's modern life. Only death is real. Maybe after living death one gets a moment of reality, and he's there, offering extreme unction.

Holding his face up like a mirror, the only distortion breathing.

*****

EVERYBODY has a schizophrenic BROTHER, AUNT, UNCLE, COUSIN, NEPHEW, SON, DAUGHTER, etc., or even, possibly, WHITE SQUIRREL - if you can believe E. FULLER TORREY....

So, when some THING STREET SLUMLORD buys another THING STREET WELFARE HOTEL, for decades HOME, SWEET HOME (sort of) to GENERATIONS of MAD PEOPLE, the FIRST THING HE DOES is BULLY PORKO into identifying ALL THE MAD PEOPLE.

He says, send me your NIGGERS, your SCHIZOS, your FAGS, your JUNKIES, your PENSIONERS, your ODSP CLAIMANTS, etc. etc. - so I can KICK THEIR ASSES OUT onto THING STREET, DOUBLE their RENT, and CLEANSE this FUCKING HOOD of ALL THEIR ILK....

Like the STATUE OF LIBERTY - REVERSED - Send me your MAD so I can CRUSH THEM even MORE - enough to make a STATUE - THE REAL ONE - WEEP!

Like the conniving (future) DEATH CAMP COMMANDANT in a (VERY) BAD B MOVIE - because it's REAL LIFE (sort of) -

Because, the NEXT THING your PARKDALE SLUMLORD does, with a NUDGE-NUDGE WINK-WINK, is INSTALL (ie., WAREHOUSE) his OWN BROTHER, AUNT, UNCLE, COUSIN, NEPHEW, SON, or DAUGHTER, etc., and maybe even THORAZINIO, his WHITE SQUIRREL - in one of his recently vacated, freshly renovated MODEL SUITES....

He'll climb the dark-varnished stairs....

He'd SLIP his MEDS UNDER the DOOR....

It was him....

All very well, but - surely - someone ought to ask this very SELECTIVELY MAD-POSITIVE SLUMLORD (ha!) - HOW is his BROTHER, AUNT, UNCLE, COUSIN, NEPHEW, SON, DAUGHTER, or PET SQUIRREL (IF he HAS one) - any DIFFERENT - JUST for being HIS?

Was THAT what CAIN meant, when he posed the rhetorical question - am I my brother's keeper? - or the ISSUE he sought to EVADE....

Certainly NOT what BEETHOVEN meant in his 9th Symphony - or SCHILLER in his ODE TO JOY...

Performed by the (very great) Wilhelm Furtwangler, before an AUDIENCE of carefully selected NAZIS probably including that celebrated SLUMLORD, ALBERT SPEER, who certainly DIDN'T GET IT EITHER....

CITIZEN SLUMLORD - do you really think ALL MEN SHALL BE BROTHERS - ONLY refers to SLUMLORDS - and THEIR BROTHERS, AUNTS, UNCLES, COUSINS, NEPHEWS, SONS, DAUGHTERS, and (possibly) FAMILY PETS?

Moreover, SLUMLORD, when you demand a HIT LIST of all the CRAZY PEOPLE - and your own BROTHER, AUNT, UNCLE, COUSIN, NEPHEW, SON, DAUGHTER, etc., and maybe even THORAZINIO, the PET SQUIRREL - appear RIGHT THERE - RIGHT at THE TOP of it - aren't you rather MORE than SCHIZOPHRENIC? Aren't you PRETTY FUCKING SICK YOURSELF?

When Johnny thought that YOU were precisely the kind of Mental Hell BABBITT whose TRANSFORMED neighborhood $CAMH - (State Capitalists ADVANCING Mental Hell [ie., MADNESS]) - so LOUDLY wanted to be A PART OF -

When he thought that THIS was BETRAYAL of MAD PEOPLE by the VERY PEOPLE who were supposed to CARE FOR THEM - he wouldn't say TRANSFORM THEM (not EVER!) - it made him VERY -

MAD!

*****

Stuff it in! Cram it in!

*****

Johnny saw Porko and Trixie Zane. Porko - aka MR PUSSYWHIPPED to his followers - was patiently waiting on Queen Street West for her to finish spending his slumlord salary on contraband cigs in Lee's Variety. Eventually she emerged, in a new party dress she'd stolen from THE CLOTHESLINE at $CAMH down the street.

She said she looked hot, in EVERYTHING. Especially hot clothes....

She looked TERRIBLE. Ravaged by LIFE, by CRACK especially....

Imagine! The CEO of Dadania's MISLeading Hospital for Brain Disease. Sponging off her own CLIENTS like that!

Yes, Trixie was a client. When she wasn't bullshitting her public, she was abusing substances, including her boyfriend.

Porko was a cuckold. While Trixie discussed GLOBAL Mental Hell on FIRE ISLAND, he fed her numerous stinky cats in her penthouse over at the GATEWAY BUILDING. He was always there. The cats got constipated, from lack of exercise. With all the hampers, there wasn't any room. He had to give them enemas....

Seeing the lovely pair united, however briefly, inspired Johnny. However briefly.

15 years ago The Hitman started hanging around the Queen West store where he was selling THINGS for Romeo, aka The Captain. Sometime FIRST SEA LORD....

The cops stormed the Thing Store looking for The Hitman because Warfarin was trying to frame him for showing them X-rated movies. The cops - plain-clothes detectives - they'd obviously been to THE CLOTHESLINE, too - were very brusque and insistent - in plain speech, assholes - and nearly arrested Johnny too (imagine!) because he understandably didn't want to talk to cops who looked and acted like punk gangsters who stole their clothing from a thrift store.

Later, he asked The Hitman what THAT was all about, and typically he acted like he suddenly didn't know him, Johnny was a stranger in his own Thing Store, not entitled to know what happening - even thought whatever it was - was solely because Porko was there.

This strange, one-sided incident was his introduction to The Hitman and his insane fucking family - not just his immediate family of a crazy-bitch wife and three fucked-up children but his extended family too, a dozen silly school-teacher brothers and an NDP mother stupider than Margaret Dumont pretended to be.

Before long The Hitman was working for The Captain and Johnny was back on the street. That was a good hit - and so it went.

Eventually Johnny got a job working for a hellish group-home conveniently located right next door to his crummy rooming house on King Street West. It was called REGENERATION HOUSE - of course, it was full of $CAMH clients so of course some idiots at head office would call it that, wouldn't they. His colleague, with whom he was in love - all covertly of course - shot his dick off (at least he thought it was his dick, because it seemed to take a while for him to bleed to death in his basement condominium) and he (Johnny) QUIT.

Pioneers of Alienation

Johnny wrote about the place in The Support Worker of Emile Durkheim House - but the folks at MISCEGENATION HOUSING AND SUPPORTS - really the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care - Stealth and Despair he preferred to call it –- kept trying to sue him and sending the cops over to wait for him to take him down for an ASSESSMENT (ouch - right in the ass) - –so he moved, and paid The Hitman's first and last week, so he could get out of his sissy spoiled NDP school-teacher brother's basement.

Johnny went to the live in a tiny cell in his current Welfare Hotel, the notorious PARKDALE MANSIONS –- a name almost as appropriate as REGENERATION HOUSE, for that HELL HOUSE where he used to work....

His superintendent - 15 years ago - was Max the Butcher, a kindly jail-bird who'd surrounded himself with gulls of similar feather, ranging from retired hustler to (semi) retired murderer. He rightly guessed murderers never retired, because this one killed again - but he was always very polite to Johnny.

Max was in bad health and offered him a cleaning job. He wanted to work in the shelters, he'd already been subsidizing The Hitman with cigarettes and small amounts of money - so he recommended him - and he became the Janitor....

The Hitman had been dating Trixie - off and on - for decades. She was his MOLL. They usually met at the local food bank, where they volunteered. It was a good gig, with plenty of benefits - as long as they didn't get caught - and nobody exposed her as CEO of the World's MISLeading Hospital for Brain Disease!

He'd load up her bundle-buggy after a shift. In the winter I'd see the wheel marks in the snow, deep ones all the way up WHITE SQUIRREL WAY to the penthouse. It wasn't stealing from the poor. They were poor - like Robbing Hood and Made Merry-Anne, a Bundle-Buggy Bunny & Clod....

Inevitably The Hitman got the THE NUANCED MOLL a gazebo in the TWIN TOWER. He and one of his fascist sissy school-teacher brothers moved her in with another half dozen cats and 30 green garbage bags of stolen used clothing. Of course she had bugs....

The Hitman knew Johnny thought she was not a very nice person, so he told her to keep a baseball bat handy beside the door....

The bat wasn't necessary. THE MOLL fit right in - what moll wouldn't, in a Welfare Hotel full of CROOKS?! She immediately paired up with the murderer. He was between kills, so he had a job - and a lot of GRASS. They were inseparable....

The Hitman was a cuckold from the get-go, he enjoyed digging in a murderer's ditch, full of his sticky juice. He borrowed money from Johnny, some of which he even repaid - and THE NUANCED MOLL bought CRACK with it, and got more and more stoned - insisting to The Hitman's fucked up kids that she could always get a job - in HOLLYWOOD! - she was an ACTOR, etc. She was - A BAD ACTOR....

Meanwhile, the incumbent superintendent was declining. The Hitman was ascending - not unlike his behavior in Johnny's THING STORE. History repeats itself - eternal return - what else can it do? The Hitman moved THE MOLL into a bigger crib, and installed ROBBER ROB in her old apartment, and one of ROBBER ROB's associates on the Queen Street side of the building. The Hitman was building his GANG....

Unfortunately, his GANG had other ideas - ROBBER ROB was building a gang of his own. He set up shop on the Beastly corner, and bought stolen goods with cut drugs - trading through his ground floor window like a bank teller through his wicket. Trixie was a regular. AstaZeneca wasn't good enough for her.... ditto The Hitman....

Soon the whole ground floor of the Beastly side of Thing Street looked exactly like Johnny's old THING STORE - but THE ROBBER never CLOSED....

The Hitman made more allies in the Parkdale hood, including a nutcase crackhead with an especially bad ODOR - a real STINKER - rumored to have burnt down his own group-home - whom Porko also tried to install in THE TWINNED TOWER, but even Porko had to draw the line somewhere....

After a fire started in The Butcher's apartment - and nearly destroyed us - Max quit. The Murderer killed again. Max was found dead in his bed. Emergency Services revived him, but his FRIENDS had already carried off his STUFF....

Then Emile Durkheim's TWINNED TOWER was sold (with Edwardian attributes) to Citizen Hearse-Ferrari and his associates at Tundra Developments. They bought the The Hitman with it. Grandfathered!

Things got crazier. The Hitman had Johnny sell him THINGS that he paid for with cheques drawn on various slumlord avatars of Citizen Hearse. Sometimes he couldn't pay what he owed Johnny, because THE MOLL owed him. She could have settled with him, but it was more fun upsetting everybody by owing them a lot of money which they knew she was wasting on drugs. Johnny's neighbor told him that The Hitman bought her crack from a dealer in the building whom Citizen Hearse wanted to liquidate, but couldn't because of what he had on The Hitman....

It got worse with ROBBER ROB.... The TWINNED TOWER was cluttered with his illegal goods and the clients he sold them to - they slept on the stairs - the women banged naked on the doors at night, and shat on the floor.... Johnny filmed his thieves market just to slow him down a little, and nearly got beat up for it.... There was no point complaining to management - management was The Hitman - the The Hitman was ROBBER's good buddy....

Finally ROBBER must have been late with the protection money one week, because the SWAT team descended on their Welfare Hotel, blew off ROBBER ROB's door with their bazooka, and took ROBBER away....

Eventually ROBBER collected all the stolen goods he'd deposited with The Hitman for safe keeping. ROBBER ROB believed in private property....

Thing Street Asylum

Meanwhile Citizen Hearse slowly began to pick off the lifers in Emile Durkheim's TWINNED TOWER. The Hitman collaborated. He was very ADAPTABLE - as he liked to say. The key to survival wasn't brute strength, after all - the MURDERER was doing time by then - but ADAPTABILITY. The Hitman suck-holed the rich-bitch hipsters, and baited the lifers.

If he could, he framed them. For instance, the lifer down the hall from him. The Hitman wanted to rent out the crib opposite him to rich hipster bitches. The bitches paid $750 for a dive that had rented for $500 a few months ago. The bathroom was across the call. The Hitman was nuts so he got the strange notion that the lifer was hitting on the hipster bitches - obviously that was why they never stayed longer than 6 months, not because the crib was a dive a rip-off not worth $300 a month - the truth! So The Hitman assaulted The Lifer with his mouth. He virtually forbade him to talk to the neighbors - like hipsters are a superior species. Meanwhile, to the hipster bitches, he's all accommodation. Want WIFI? - in a Welfare Hotel that barely had hydro? - no problem - says The Hitman - use MINE!

Mr PUSSYWHIPPED HITMAN's latest scheme was to frame Johnny with his kids. They weren't even kids any more - just more GANGSTERS. His daughter was the NOTORIOUS DONUT GIRL. Her mug shot's on the wall of every TIM HORTONS DONUT SHOP from here to MISSISSAUGA. She's trading on her youth all right. Daddy's Girl - somehow she got into OCAD. She wanted to be an artist.

Johnny became DONUT GIRL's errand boy, her ambassador. He negotiated a place for her, got her a deal from Henry's, numerous cameras and props, etc - but the apple falls close to the tree (as ROBBER is wont to say) - and DONUT GIRL treated him like her nigger, wouldn't even look him in the eye when he was talking to her, told him she wasn't into CAMERAS....

She shouted and whined - generally acted out - in her shrill little Donut Girl Voice, sounding like an orange cruller would, if it was in distress and could talk....

Whining that she'd been toiling away all day long at the Donut Shop, which The Fag knew meant she'd been trading on her tits and long hair and saccharine simper, but she was getting old, she was 21....

She was just another fat lazy sow and she didn't have any money (did you hear that, Daddy?), she couldn't be bothered to get off her fat butt to come to the door, she didn't know anything about cameras and she wasn't "into" photography - although The Fag had spent hours negotiating on her behalf with Mrs.Wolfson, the owner of Henry's Camera Shop, and had given her all kinds of camera equipment - a tripod, negatives, old cameras, etc - for free, just because she was such a wonderful marvelous Donut Girl....

But, The Fag reflected, at a least part of her bitchy little harangue was true. She wasn't into cameras, or any kind of art or anything related to art, which at least required some degree of empathy; she was into donuts - the HOLE part....

The Janitor was obviously having trouble with his spoiled bitch daughter, not unlike King Lear, who had a few Donut Girls of his own....

He told The Hitman she was a bitch. After he left the two of them worked up some scheme to tell Citizen Hearse that he'd raped them both....

Meanwhile Warfarin wasn't doing very well. He'd been living in the DONUT GIRL's old room over at Velma's. He'd been beating her up over old disability cheques he said she'd lost but he'd already spent. He skulked around the building, and one day escalated on the street, shouting. Johnny shouted back. Bad move - because now he'd not only raped the DONUT GIRL, he'd traumatized WARFARIN, too!

Citizen Hearse got an earful next time TRIXIE SANE checked in on her pussycats. How he'd raped her too - the final insult....

He wasn't even straight, but then nobody was at EMILE DURKHEIM HOUSE....

There they went! CEO of the WORLD'S MISLEADING HOSPITAL for BRAIN DISEASE - and her Hitman - one big THING STREET ITEM....

*****

Butch turned over on his filthy sofa and looked out his window at Porko and Donut Girl in Hearse-Ferrari's Godfather Garden three stories below. They were having one of their not infrequent family arguments only this one looked more violent than usual. He'd never seen Donut Girl beat the lawn furniture with her fists before. But she did today. This was obviously a special occasion.

It looked like it was going to be good! He rarely got out of bed except to pee and get another Olde English so he could pee again, but he made an exception for this unprecedented display of family affection and values.

He heard a medley of her favorite phrases, carefully culled from a young lifetime wasted on social media, mangled even worse by his intoxication and her hysteria.

She screamed. Porko was doing his best to ignore her by typing on his phone. What about ME, she fairly shrieked.

Where was that movie he wanted to order?

They get everything!

Yes, Amazon had a pretty good selection.

Pioneers of Alienation

She meant Warfarin Boy and Little Herman, especially at Christmas like last Christmas when they got laptops and Donut Girl got a lump of coal.

Who? What?

ME! What about ME?! I'm only twenty-two, she added apparently as a non-sequitur but doubtlessly referring to the fact that because no one paid her any attention or gave her anything for Christmas she had to bear by herself the burden of humanity at the tender age of twenty-two.

However it was not in the character of Donut Girl to say twenty-two skiddoo.

Instead she said Daddy, I'll never speak to you again!

Such an opportunity, if only he'd got her to put it in writing but of course he hadn't been paying her any attention. She'd brought her Great Lab over. She would speak to Rex, and Rex would pay attention. Rex began to bark. Windows crashed in the airing court. Somebody threw an old shoe, very old. Rex was not barking at her however but at Little Herman who suddenly appeared in most untimely fashion with his own mutt Spot. In fact it was Spot who was the object, the sole object of his attention. I'll never forgive you, she wailed but whether to the dog or to her father, Butch never determined because he was just too stoned.

*****

Boomers bums and bombs, she typed. Donut Girl was composing the slogan for her latest enterprise, scam in other words. She'd been valedictorian at Art School, so not only couldn't she spell, she prided herself on her mistakes regarding them as precious badges of individuality, of her uniquely wonderful self.

She explained that the bathroom was just across the hall. She omitted to mention that it was unwise to leave it unlocked for even a minute, since that was enough time for the local crack whore to enter and steal your toiletries. Five minutes was enough time for her to take a dump in the crapper and somehow manage to smash it on the way out. Fortunately the bathroom door featured a deadbolt because you were going to need it. Incidentally don't get any ideas about inviting Amanda up for an overnighter. They were roomies. Besides, it was a single bed and it was flimsy!

While the plumbing arrangements facilitated community engagement, even greater opportunity was afforded by direct access to the shared airing court with its delightful iron fire-escapes, organic dumpsters and freshy-dug pet cemetery. If one were lucky a long-term tenant would appear, known in the trade as a "lifer" or a "client" (as in patient of a mental hospital) - for local colour! While you were invited to speak to it, even to listen to its inevitable complaints about her dear pappa, just don't give it any money since it will inevitably spend it all on drugs and the next day be right back at your door for some more. Pretend you really were in an insane asylum or, better yet, a zoo! Please! Don't feed the lemurs!

In the unlikely event that the backyard proves too tame, remember the Parkdale Activity Recreation Centre is literally steps away. In fact, it's right next door and it's the roughest drop-in Toronto. That's saying something, yes siree! And right next door to the soup kitchen is another building just like this one except it was renovated after being gutted by fire. It's like the Twin Towers only smaller. It would be a Walker's Paradise only it's more like Hell.

You could sample the free lunch or if you were especially peckish there were any number of soup kitchen drop-ins and food-banks just down the street. She could personally recommend St. France's Table. It would cost you a buck but if you were from the States, with the exchange, it would only cost a quarter!

If you were interested in a convenient list of nearby places to go, Sean the Kidd of the Centre for Affliction and Mental Hell has recently completed a PhD thesis on inclusive spaces in the neighborhood. He'd show it to you for two dollars or fifty cents U.S. He could usually be found panhandling outside the local Liquor Store which, not just incidentally, was conveniently located just a few blocks down the street and happened to be one of the most inclusive spaces of all! It included her fancy man several times a day. If you noticed him, as was more likely than not since his Harlequin suit was really quite distinctive, pleasure be sure to say hello etc....

******

They called him Little Father Victor Scotchtan. He'd been operating a notorious soup kitchen for decades in the Lower Depths of Inner Porkdale. He was a pioneer of poverty pimpdom. His latest land grab had sinister implications. It was consistent with what all thinking reasonable people knew were his real motives. To guarantee hazardous inadequate poorly maintained and humiliating homelessness to local pimps junkies and dealers forever. Since he got everybody hooked back in 1980 he'd grown into the biggest sickest body farmer in the world. His nightmare vision of misery and disease was blacker than ever. Suddenly fifty hitherto relatively harmless innocent peons found themselves transformed into permanently disenfranchised party members. Morbid malnourished and mendicant.

Thing Street was just a catwalk in a body farm where a Rubber Factory used to be. Boss Willis had finally purchased his old welfare hotel for Murder Housing. It was Murder Housing or another Hearse-Ferrari Molecular Science Condo Development a Grow-Op in Every One. Now Johnny's Porkdale Mansion would be a Welfare Hotel forever. It meant a guaranteed income for Father Scotchtan and Brother Heinz and their cohorts at Murder Housing.

Father Scotchtan started to regard himself as an organizational genius. He spoke in veiled pseudo-mystical terms

of the fearful synergy he'd magically awakened in late-night marathons with the formidable Citizen Hearse. The Board moves in mysterious ways, he murmured. Nudge nudge wink wink.

Actually Johnny and all the other inmates had considered it inevitable that Father Scotchtan's soup kitchen would buy Porkdale Mansions if only because they couldn't be a soup kitchen any more with all the bums moving to Mimico. They had to be a landlord or move to Mimico too. Soup kitchens were finished.

Johnny only wondered why it took so long....

Meanwhile Father Scotchtan wondered what would make a suitable moniker for his latest money-maker....

Ah well! The Board will provide....

*****

Strangers appeared out of the Ethernet, like condensation on a toilet. The males were indistinguishable from females only their Hugo Boss jeans were even tighter. Their hair was their second most striking characteristic for its theatrical artificiality (and the reverse). Despite their apparent wealth they constantly used terms like and including affordability and reasonably priced. They were cheap but only because they were artists.

The also talked a lot about walking distance but thy flew in by jet from all around the world and really only walked the last few steps from the taxi into Emile Durkheim House. They were Donut Girl's tenants, the first subjects of her nascent empire. They were hipsters!

It was a novel idea and very brilliant, a transient-hotel for hipsters in a group home, a residential treatment facility for schizophrenics. The hipsters felt unaccountably at home.

*****

He hated his neighbors. They tried to act like sweet old people but they couldn't pull it off. They'd do the junkie knock on his door. Dum dah-dah dum-dum! Let's go! He never even smoked pot. If he was stupid enough to open the door, they'd ask for a few cookies to have with their tea and a spot of milk and a few bonbons for their sweet tooth and just three or four squares of toilet paper because they'd just run out. They'd leave with a pound of cookies a litre of milk a bag of candy and a whole role or two of asswipes. They'd promise to get him something really nice for Christmas. When he met them shopping at the No Frillies they stared and stared at that peanut butter display on the opposite side of the store. It was really nice if you weren't fussy and you liked Struldbruggs.

*****

Johnny met Elijah on the corner opposite The Edmo where he lived. Elijah was wearing an old gray Homburg. It made him look like a film noir detective, or a spy. Johnny knew he liked to pretend he was somewhere else. Anywhere besides Thing Street in Parkdale Hogtown. Usually Paris in the 30s.

Elijah was sitting on the curb, smoking. Johnny paused to talk to him, and Elijah looked up. He said he felt empty, like there was something missing in his life

Johnny said he felt it too. The wind created by all the suction of $CAMH at Thing and Ozztown down the street. It created a vacuums with its nothingness. Nature hated it, but not as much as Johnny. The slogans. The posters. No matter what was printed on them, they announced it was a totalitarian institution. Part of the neighborhood? All of it! Removing stigma? No, clients!

There were stations along the way. Maybe they were nodules or fistulas. Cancers, sores. Thing and Ozztown. Ozztown one of those endless Dadanian bridle-paths that disappeared somewhere in the badlands. So far as anyone knew nobody had ever got to the end of it, and come back. Maybe it didn't end. One took subways, then streetcars, the buses before finally having to walk. Anyone who could afford a car had already driven off in the opposite direction. There really was nowhere else to go.

That was one of the things that made Thing and Ozztown a Black Hole. Arboreal dog teams, runners of the woods, fur-traders, prospectors and Mounties mingled with charlatans, realtors, alienists and hardware salesmen. All demented, without any insight at all. The world was their oyster, for the shucking. They had a lien on the next century, and the next.

They shopped for worthless overpriced offal in the clip-joint galleries established by statist criminals fronting for the Ministry of Stealth and Long-Term Despair. They mistook C. Lamprini Eel's Dime Museum for an Art Gallery. A Freak for an Art Show. They never realized the main exhibit was themselves. They should have gone in free. Indeed, one of the arcades had been named Freedom Street, then the name had suddenly been withdrawn, erased from all the maps, and the old signs burnt or melted down. It was as if an atrocity had been committed there, or a miracle.

It was both. Hitler's jawbone was buried there. Emigre Russian jewelers, operating out of cold war sleeper-cells, maintained their front behind the sheet-metal facades of ancient establishments. They sold trash salted with

unaccountably rich treasure, like someone had plundered the contents of a Romanoff duchess's town house and deposited it pell-mell on the counter, servants' trinkets and Cartier eggs. But the greatest egg they laid was Hitler's jawbone. Directly under the doorway of the Kam Min Variety. Patients trod on it daily buying contraband cigarettes, on nightmare.

Johnny used to sit on the concrete bench with Trixie and read his manuscript. They could see the Kam Moon across Thing Street. They never sold anything that he could see, but thirty people came and went every hour with the same little black plastic grocery bag. Oblivious to the relic underfoot.

He remembered seeing the old asylum shortly after arriving in the City, when he would walk from Mad Professor Handy's up Vagina to Thing Street then West to the KGB Jeweler. The KGB man would be murmuring how he learned watchmaking working on beautiful jeweled timers for top-secret bombs and missiles. They set him up, bought him a store, stocked it with Nazi loot. Who, who set him up? Johnny asked. But his mind was elsewhere, thinking of that house of lost minds. It appeared like something in a dream, without context, no part of anything - least of all the eternally crummy Thing Street Strip. Victorian haberdashers, Depression Era Shelters, Cold War sleeper-cells not yet begun to morph into their pomo equivalents. Still no Gift Shops at $CAMH! Definitely NOT a part of the neighborhood. Not wanting to be either.

It gave him a thrill nonetheless. Made him pause like the sailors must have paused passing the iceburg on the Titanic.

Asylum! Been a long time gone....

If only they could have boarded it and SAILED AWAY to it, but they'd sunk back in 1912 and they were still drowning....

*****

Elijah suddenly butted out his cigarette and stood erect. I have something to show you, he said. He pointed to the door of The Edmo. Then Johnny noticed he had a few of his painting stacked beside it. Take one, he said. I want to give you something. He showed him a few nudes, explaining that the feminists would kill him if they saw them. Johnny preferred one in dark red and black, probably a self-portrait. So take it, Elijah said.

He thought he ought to offer something in exchange. He suggested cigarettes, but Elijah said he already had smokes. How about $10? Johnny peered into his wallet, hoping he had a ten dollar bill so he wouldn't have to give him a twenty. He did. He handed it to Elijah, and took a good look at the picture since he'd just bought it. The subject looked like Elijah (stocky and shorthaired) and he wore his clothes like him, his shirt buttoned all the way up to his collar. He was cross-eyed. He said he'd wanted to convey something of his madness.

Johnny said he looked normal to him.

Thing Street Asylum was beginning to make sense....

*****

You promised me an organic unprocessed stay in the heart of a bold vibrant Queen West neighborhood only steps away from the swinging entertainment district - like Catherine Zahn said on her "Spring Hope" Blog....

What a crock of shit! Donut Girl - you lied! I came here to attend the Biggest Breakthrough Ever All-Night Beer Bash for Diseased Brains Fundraiser hosted by Catherine herself at Jeff Robber's Flake Hotel. I am a Clean Air Ambassador and Member without Portfolio but with Plenipotentiary Powers of the Deflowerment Council. I therefore have diplomatic immunity and expect to be treated at all times with Therapeutic Courtesy....

However, this was definitely not a therapeutic milieu. My visit began with my downstairs neighbor pounding on my door, impersonating the Pizza Man and insisting I buy pizzas I'd never even ordered. They were still in the box! They were frozen! Then my next door neighbor stopped me in the hall to discuss his blood clots. How revolting! I tried to relax in the so-called Godfather Garden but this unshaven bum reeking of stale cigarettes and urine crept out of the bushes and accused me of being a waste of taxes if I didn't help him with some crap he was writing for plagiarist dummies at York University.

Who ARE these people?!

I came here for the new kind of hospital, and ended up in the Emergency Department!

I demand a refund!

I'm seriously considering suing you for brain damage....

*****

Cheque Day. Top of the world, ma! He'd got his mandatory grilled cheese at Family Values grill across from Porc Soup Kitchen. The old Greek that ran it musts have meant the dysfunctional Family of Mankind. No normal families ate there.

Butch had his grilled cheese wrapped in wax paper. He carried it in one hand in a brown paper bag. In the other hand he manipulated his cane. It had originally been all for effect but now with the alcoholism the drug abuse the q-

balls etc he really needed it to keep from keeling over. Butch was also somewhat litigious by nature not to say downright abusive so he liked to wave the cane in the face of his interlocutors for emphasis. He had a sharp legal mind especially when drunk.

When he finally made it across Thing Street he noticed a bundle of filthy rags he hadn't met before. Actually he thought he dimly recognized her under all those gaudy rags. He hadn't seen Trixie in ages.

Baby Doll? He queried.

Don't look at me, she shrieked over and over again from the doorway to the housing agency whose Philippinoes did all the work around the place.

He had to look at her now. He couldn't help staring. Baby Doll where you been? he politely queried all the time wondering what had happened to her hair. It was an orange mess. And her face?

Father Scotchtan's goons kidnapped me disguised as flower children. Their leader was a guitar-playing kraut-nazi who was rough with me and slapped me around a lot because I would't listen to his protest songs. I got tired of hearing them over and over again. Especially that one about a hotel fire 50 years ago after a bunch of bums died after they got stuck on the fire-escape.

Trixie! That one's a classic!

I just wanted a fix! Heinz 57 got me preggers too. Carrying the spawn of such a lousy guitarist was like growing a cancer inside me. The thought of Ein Klein Heinz looking just like his daddy with a greasy pony-tail and bad teeth almost made me vomit!

Poor Baby(s)!

So I took a coat hanger and stabbed it through my pussy. 57 heard me screaming and called the authorities. I was in the hospital but I escaped. The cops are after me. I'm wanted for murder.

It's OK, Baby Doll! I'm a social worker. I'll take care of everything. Can I get you a glass of water?

*****

Sweetie slammed his door early in the morning as he dragged his liquor bottles to the garbage chute. Lately Sweetie had become a lot quieter, because he was dealing Injun Ciggs up and down the hall. That was how he got his name, from Baby Doll on Death Row whom he was alternately fucking and ripping off with Injuns.

Johnny heard his door open and watched through the spyglass as one of Sweetie's cohorts emerged, the smalltime senescent punk gangster the lifers called Small Potatoes, because of his no-account status and his diminutive balls. The latter were legendary among the desperate floozies whose sole remaining clientele were Struldbruggs. Johnny'd seen him sneaking down the hall in the early morning accompanied by a couple of his blackest bitches. No doubt they told him his balls were enormous, stupendous even as he struggled to get it up, the skanks trying hard not to giggle. Johnny pictured Potatoes on his fat backside on the pile of sticky mens' magazines that littered his filthy mattress, one black whore massaging his withered prick while the other licked his Potatoes. The apartment stank of fries, burnt hamburgs and India Rubber. He kept smelling it all day. He couldn't get the picture out of his mind.

*****

There'd been warnings. Someone calling himself Lonewolf had obviously dealt with the same losers he had. He wrote about them on his blog. Johnny recognized them, even without their names. It seemed the originals had even recognized themselves, judging by the number of times the Wolf's blog had been deleted. They obviously hadn't felt flattered by their resemblance, and had complained to the authorities, who'd left notices online concerning the deletions. Lonewolf had prevailed however and left notices of his own, taunting and triumphant. He bragged that they'd all be dead and forgotten, except for the things he'd written about their corruption, which were numerous, nasty, and like truth eternal.

*****

Bird Woman went back to her island to vote for the local tin-pot dictator. She was a strong believer in extra-judicial murder. On her way to feed her pigeons she complained. How heartless people were. She'd found an injured pigeon in the gutter and the bums on the corner mocked her for bringing it home. Junkies had no compassion. They knew how to treat them on her island. They'd hang them from the rubber trees….

When she got back from her island she was furious. She'd left her birds in the care of one of her new girl-friends. Baby Doll had cared for them in her penthouse high atop the Rubber Factory. Baby Doll must have been a junkie too, because all but Angel never emerged alive again. Bird Woman was furious. That was the last time she'd trust a junkie. They were murderers. Heartless murderers. She wanted to hang Baby Doll from the phone pole outside.

Angel wasn't doing well. She'd been traumatized by that bitch. Look! Angel's neck-feathers were all ruffled where Baby Doll been choking her to death. O the poor thing! Bird Woman repeated over and over. It was her favourite saying, her mantras. She would have known. She kept Angel confined in a cat carrier in a dark corner of her apartment. If only the SPCA had known!

Pioneers of Alienation

*****

The whole neighbourhood really the whole city STANK. He wanted to stand Porkdale on its end and pour it into Lake Hogtario like the steerage on the Titanic. He pictured the bums screaming limbs flailing as they plunged into the big sewer. The social workers and the politicians looking for a handout, a lifeboat, a pension, a package, anything. They'd put on dresses and claim they were trannies, definitely marginal. Women and transsexuals first, but not in that order. Gangway!

He was sick and tired of dirty feet and ass-stinking bums. Speaking of which, there was one right now. There he was! Butch! How could he fail to recognize Butch Wannabe?! Not to mention the trade-mark pedo candy-cane with the kid-bait tootle-oo. His hairy Butch-face with the floorlength biker-beard and the sass-glasses, half-hidden by the Velcro hoodie.

Butch was skulking around Thing Street. Oddly enough, he thought nobody would recognize him. He thought he was incognito. He spied and snickered, observing Johnny as he tacked up yet another poster outside the Porkdale Business Bodyfarm Association.

*****

Beware! Predatory bullies in a seniors' building!
Sweetie likes to exploit mentally ill women.
Gives them special deal on illegal cigarettes.
One hundred bucks a carton!
Cheap cheap cheap!
(Glasses by Dollarama ©)

Small Potatoes!
Same taste as Sweetie.
Also, utters threats.
Plays with women's goves.
Leaves left-handed ones
at your door then
poops his diaper!

Call Rubber Murder Housing
for a contract
today!

*****

Johnny watched from the doors of the Body Farm Improvement Association as Butch Wannabe scrutinized the posters. Johnny was surprised Butch could read. He couldn't. He looking at the mug-shots of Sweetie and Small Potatoes. Everybody knew. Butch liked to look at pictures. With a little squeal like the one he usually made over cock photos especially his own (Butch was a narcissist) he tore down the Wanted Poster like he intended to collect the bounty.

Actually he intended to save his good buddy. He clutched the paper in his hand, furtively hobbling down Thing West his candy-cane with the pedo-bait tottle-oo flailing madly. Fortunately he didn't need it for balance. Like the floor-length beard, it was only a prop. He thought it made him incognito. Go figure. Johnny saw it all.

Till Butch hobbled out of sight, into the Rubber Factory Body Farm Compound. A few were always out on the lawn, composting. Shooting the shit and sooner or later becoming it too. They started they experiments earlier every year, now before they were quite dead. They still stank though, of stale piss and shit and Sweetie's Injun Cigs. Butch didn't mind. He didn't even notice. He was a Stinker too.

Butch nodded at the city's living forensic experiments. They were pals. Didn't all perverts tune in to the same station? There was Jimmie, and there was Eddie. The dashing free delivery from the Psycho Pharm AC/DC used to sit between their reaking hooves till he got wise. How come whenever he brought them fresh Viagra they put on a slasher movie right where the dashing young male delivery boy gets buggered? Dash was just too smart not to notice the coincidence.

Today Butch had no time to chat with Club Meds. With barely a tootle-oo for the sake of the absent Dash, he proceeded into the grand lobby. Mahmoud had already pried open the door and jammed it with a copy of the Hostar Bulletin. Butch went directly to Sweetie's cell, at the end of Death Row. He scratched on the door, and meowed. It was their signal. Didn't all lovers have their own private language?

It meant Sweetie was to meet him at the other end of the complex. His was the cell with the Old English door knocker shaped like a Negro footman beating a congo. The only cell thus equipped, it wasn't hard to find. A few

moments later the footman drummed a Jazz tattoo like Buddy Rich on an off day. Sweetie had talent.

*****

Sweetie had an enormous yellow hard-on for Johnny. Especially when he saw the poster. He started to swear. He foamed at the mouth. Johnny always at his door! He lied. He bent down to Butch's greasy smoke-stained door to illustrate. Like this! He lied. Johnny take my picture! He lied! And my little boy! Lies! We scared! Lies lies lies.

Johnny only took his picture surreptitiously through the spy-glass on his door. All the pictures were of Sweetie dealing his garbage in the hall, the common area. The one exception was of Sweetie on the tricycle he rode to make deliveries. A few photos showed the minor, the so-called little boy, a pre-diebetic fatty loitering with one of the dealers in the hall, the common area. The minor hadn't even known. All the pictures had been taken with the approval of the Commissars of Rubber Housing, and subsequently forwarded to the Police.

Sweetie had him as a world-class pornographer, up there with Andy Milligan. Not that he knew who that was, or didn't love porn at least as much as Butch. People said an old whore made a good nun. It was obviously true, albeit briefly in their case.

Sweetie abandoned his apartment to a gang of pimps, crack-whores and dealers. The Comissar of Client Services was notified but only sent him letters one after the other which of course Sweetie ignored as over the next three years he disrupted the building, exhausted his ciggy stink into the hall, set off the fire alarms, preyed upon mentally ill and retarded women, chased old women down the hall, dealt illegal cigarettes and drugs at exorbitant predatory rates, enabled trespassers and vagrants who acted out in the building, rode his tricycle up and down the hall running over Old Bugger and his pals delivering injuns door to door, placed nuisance calls to the police, illegally cohabited with a minor, lied and lied and lied, and of course violated every safety measure in his seniors' building.

Sweetie! What a great guy!

*****

The emergency door was routinely defective because tampered with and staff never noticed because nobody ever did rounds. The Sheik and his associates routinely taped it open with the bright yellow tape they stole from crime scenes. Johnny saw it from his window, but staff never noticed.

With trespassers, fellow dealers and gang members Small Potatoes tottered down the staircase onto Death Row. It was midnight and The Plague was raging but even with half a mozzarella his problem wasn't senile dementia it was drugs and booze. Now he'd left his pot on the stove and just forgot about it setting off the fire alarm.

Some of the black gangsters who squatted in his cell were already talking to the firemen in the hall. The door was open and another gangster was fanning the air under the fire alarm. Don't worry about it! Forget about it! said Potatoes. Suddenly the alarm stopped.

Goddammit! With all the excitement I pooped my diaper, muttered Small Potatoes headed for the toilet.

What a great man! The stinker!

*****

Needless to say Thing West stank like a corpse already. The Hood had been destroyed by the virus. It had been on life-support already, with all the over-priced unsustainable vegan hipster joints. The virus just pulled the plug. Now it was a big mercantile body farm. The question being how much it would take these deceased enterprises to go away. The obvious answer was not long.

Even the pubic library was closed, so the bums had nowhere to pinch one. That was all it was good for anyway. Their collection stank. They refused to stock anything that Trixie Zane, CEO of the local bin that filled all the boarding homes with their schizoid clients, wouldn't like. Johnny felt excluded. He just didn't feel comfortable in a library that refused to stock his books. He could crap in the street.

Everyone else did. Taking an empty streetcar to desolate empty downtown, Mannikins spotted one of the regulars with his filthy denims around his fruit boots, his spectacularly fat butt exposed with a suitably fat turd protruding from it like a cigar from the leering Bozo clown-face of W.C. Fields. There was a tent city behind him of similar fucks. Evidently nobody had a pot to piss in, or shit either. The streetcar paused to let some poor loser disembark, like he really had somewhere he wanted to go. It felt like a tour bus, halting so the marks could take in the local colour. The driver telling them through a megaphone that if they cared to look to their right, they'd see a real piece wiping himself. Must be tidy!

*****

Johnny avoided Thing Street. Dungass was classier. True the veganistas had penetrated there too but there were still a few Portuguese butcher shops. They proudly displayed blood sausage in their windows. The vegans shrank when they passed them screaming inwardly. Then, after, Dungass, came El Dorado. Worthless World! The regulars

wandered all day among the trash, finally lining up for half an hour to buy a couple of Pokemon cards they didn't even want. Just to buy something. To prove they existed. Nobody would say they were alive. That was going too far. The trash was more alive.

*****

There was Phil I Stine, in tight-assed jeans, black t shirt, and mandatory Bloodstones ©. Too bad about the rest. He'd grown grey, and had a washed out face. He managed the very-very gallery on Thing West, a front for Kiwanis Club Philistines. It was located in an old Cop Shop, naturally the finest edifice on the whole strip. Phil I Stine Phil got a free apartment from the Kiwanis Club, just for doing art the way someone with a regular metabolism takes a crap every morning, with virtually the same result. He was a loser.

He based his whole career on buying up a ton of toy robots, photographing them in storefront windows, and displaying the photographs in his own gallery. Now he was examing the obsolete gadgets handing from the wall in cellophane baggies. More robot body parts? Maybe it felt like a gallery. Making him feel right at home. Johnny was afraid to touch anything he'd handled. Phil I Stine was probably carrying….

Lafferty was always at Worthless World. He was a regular bottom-feeder. Which was an oxymoron, since there was nothing regular about the denizens of Worthless World, not even their digestion. They were what his ancestors used to put on iceburgs and shove out to sea with hungry polar bears. Bottom-feeding coelacanths that hadn't gone instinct because of some kind of evolutionary sick joke. They were worse than the garbage they collected, less than worthless. They were black poison holes in the monetary system.

Lafferty lived with his brother and one traumatized tenant in a gigantic mansion full of shit. He spent his whole life collecting and rearranging it in little piles on the floor and on shelves that even obscured his windows. He could hardly breathe in there. Daylight never penetrated.

He especially favoured playing cards. After years of hoarding it could safely be said he wasn't playing with a full deck. He never would be. It wasn't in the cards. The Joker! The Hanged Man! He would scour the baggies along the West Wall for fresh ones. He'd find some but not at the right price. He'd examine the deck like a croupier before seasoned gamblers, looking for a cheat. He'd count them. Twice! He'd put them back then retrieve them. Twice! Finally he'd spend $5. but it took an effort. After all he didn't drink or smoke. He was a health nut. Always dieting.

Lafferty was short so Johnny had trouble finding him in the aisles. If Lafferty hadn't shave in weeks, as was often the case, Johnny wouldn't be able to recognize him under that off-white Butch. Now because there was a plague on he wore a mask as well. Johnny figured he was hiding. If Lafferty spotted Johnny first, he'd just leave. Or more likely continue his rounds, and then leave. Lafferty had a system, a routine. He was nothing if not regular in his habits. The one thing regular about him. About some of his habits, anyway.

He would scour every single aisle, looking for the objects he desired. After playing cards, he sought toy puppets, Mexican Day of the Dead Memorabilia for his big little sister, anatomical models, camera lenses, German radios, bead-work belts, wampum…. If Johnny tagged along, Lafferty would get annoyed. He got in his way. Sometimes Johnny thought Lafferty lived only for garbage. He didn't value his friendship. He did, but somewhat less than garbage.

Thrifting was a way of life, the announcer said over the in-store loud-speaker. No! It was a way of death.

In the parking lot, loading his binder of coveted playing cards into his bicycle carrier, Lafferty waxed poetic. He was already 70, but he was in great shape. He was off to the gym right now. Johnny told him to be careful, or he'd become a Struldbrugg. He thought he'd go for 100, he said and spat a big guey glob onto the pavement. Deep, Johnny thought.

*****

It's always a girlfriend with you handsome studs isn't it.

Father! I can't believe there's such a thing as society if this can happen to a gal like Baby Doll!

I need clients many clients for social work. Otherwise how can I possibly effect social change?

Yes, Father! But I don't understand….

Our drop-in is poor…. It's not very pretty but it's the only one we have…. The stench of feet and ass makes normals turn their noses up at us….

Father! I showered just yesterday!

I need clients. Clients for Social Science Research. You've heard of the Wellesley Institute?

Sure, Father.

Troll the shelters. Find clients with no identification. Tell them about Porc Hotel. Say it's a swell resort a spa a therapeutic milieu. Tell them there's a private room awaiting them a model suite. Refer them to me. Send them over. Process them. Then destroy their records. Make them disappear!

But, Father! Human Trafficking!

Transforming Lives, Butch!

I don't know, Father.

I take it you love this Baby Doll very much. She's more than just a piece to you!

Well, yeah!

Agreed, then.

Well, I guess….

Thing Street Asylum

I'll give it to her!
Eh?
The fix, you ninny!
O, yeah!
See Trixie Zane at the Asylum.....
Yes, Father!
Give her this voucher....
Yes, Father!
She will present you with a dosette which you are to bring to me.
Yes, Father!
Go forth young man and make a difference!

*****

At the Asylum ball....

Ask COUNT ORLOK: Join team DARKNESS TO LIGHT and help defeat mental hell by supporting those blood-sucking vampires at SCAMAITCH. The BLOOD is the LIFE? Trixie Zane!

Ask Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre of the MONEYGRUBBING FUNDRAISER FOUNDATION! Ask DentsuBOS, the FASCIST PR FIRM they PARTNER WITH!

It's THE MONEY!

Do you think all this BULLSHIT is spontaneous and free? Do you think it comes cheap? It's obviously all orchestrated, from the format of the tweets and facebook pages to the text files which bear the DentsuBOS logo. It costs MILLIONS! Because SCAMH is the biggest BLOODSUCKER, the biggest VAMPIRE, the biggest NOSFERATU of them all - well, SECOND BIGGEST. Because it doesn't even exist. Because -

It's THE MONEY!

SCAMH is SCAMAITCH is - DEAD! It's a MEDIA CONSTRUCT. It's a BLACK HOLE in the DADANIAN BRAIN - sucking every psyche into itself, transforming it into LIVING DEATH - into SMEGMA BRAIN. Read any so-called communication, watch any so-called video - it's SMEGMA -

It's THE MONEY....

But HEY! Everybody likes a good party. Getting HIGH with a bunch of HIPSTERS and POSERS on THING STREET! Who don't know anything about MENTAL HELL - whatever the fuck it is - that they didn't read on TWITTER. Who seriously believe they're going to CURE SCHIZOPHRENIA with an all-nighter. And who never wonder what SCAMH is going to do with more MILLIONS, that they aren't doing with all the hundreds of millions they've SCAMMED already. Because the only logical answer is NOTHING. It's -

THE MONEY!

So what more can I say? Good evening! Listen! It is the CHILDREN of the NIGHT, ENDLESSLY ROCKING! It's - MONEY!

Turkish delight on a moonlit night....

*****

They got Johnny ON, while getting THEMSELVES into the BLUE BOOK.
They were the medical equivalent of fair weather friends.
Here, there, everywhere for Johnny. Till the going got rough. Then they were NOWHERE.
They know all the WORDS, all the jargon too. Mindfulness for mindless quackerry. circleofcare for passthebuck.
Privacy? Forgetaboutit! Every idiot had access to the CASE HISTORY you hold in your hands.
That was a lot of people, on THING STREET.
Maybe he'd a "touch" of paranoia - but I believed when the #crackdown came it would he from $CAMH. If they seemed innocuous, he remembered. Hitler started with Hollerith Cards (supplied by IBM!)....

Ask FRANKIE: Join us cats and help defeat SCAMH by mainlining the donations.
They wouldn't have cured anyone so at least somebody got high - besides Trixie and her squaresville entourage.
Hey, maybe you'll O.D. and get to be a Poster Boy!
That's a real downer, man.
What'll you give me for this gently-used trumpet, autographed by Chet Baker?

*****

Pioneers of Alienation

Ask Joe MENGELE ([Ir]regular Joe): Join my gang and stay up all night listening to MOZART remembering fallen comrades!

Don't worry about CURING MENTAL ILLNESS.

We'll do that tomorrow morning. If it's really THE CURE you want (we all know what it is).

Tomorrow belongs to SCAMAITCH! To ME - Joe MENGELE!

*****

It seems you've met Daddy's friends. I'm so sorry. I meant to warn you. They live here! It shouldn't be allowed!

Doesn't the City maintain shelters for people like them? We have a very efficient garbage removal service. What about the human trash?

Of course I refuse to rent to such people. There are filters for cleansing losers and troublemakers, and absolutely everyone on Social Assistance - especially Disability Pensioners! They're just so rude!

The trouble is I still only rent out a small number of units this way. The rest are regulated by the city's anti-discrimination laws, and occupied by lifers.

However, I'm working hard to cleanse the Parkdale neighborhood of scum, and hopefully by this time next year I'll have kicked out most if not all of the degenerates you met last night and who detracted so thoughtlessly from your enjoyment of Parkdale Mansions.

Who knows, perhaps by then I'll have purged a whole floor of citizens, to be enjoyed as an enclave or a quarter or a ghetto, exclusively by airhead and breakfast clientele, like and hopefully dare I say, including you!

Believe when I say, I have a dream!

With sprinkles on,
Donut Grrrl
Social Entrepreneur
Airhead'n Breakfast Tycoon

*****

If you can't beat'em join DIRTY DENTSUBOS DEFILERS for an allnighter DEFILING MENTALHEALTH with yet another MONEYMAKING TRICK from DEBAUCHED MERCENARIES and DEFEATDENIAL because IT'S ALL IN YOUR ASS "Across the Lifespan and Around the World" (CAMH CEO Trixie Zane).

*****

How Donut Girl Constructed her Air Bed and Breakfast Reich on Human Misery....

Donut Girl wasn't just a girl, she was a movement. Her devoted followers collected her spelling mistakes. When she accused some filthy perv in Tilley clothes at Jeff Robber's Flake Hotel of "starring" at her tits, they applauded. They would have collected her farts.

Like any movement, hers needed martyrs. Warfarin Boy's being her brother was no impediment. Indeed it made him a likely candidate for elimination, as convenient as necessary, and she knew his weaknesses.

Of course he loved her brother, but Warfarin Boy was in the way. She wished he would just disappear, and wondered if there was some way to make him, without creating a big mess in his apartment, which of course she intended to rent out the moment he departed. Whether this life or this City was all the same to Donut Girl, a matter of perfect albeit tender indifference.

Warfarin had knocked around while Donut Girl learned rudimentary exploitation renting out even her breakfast nook to stupid girlfriends. Warfarin meanwhile had lived in City Shelters, where Donut Girl wanted to send the lifers of Parkdale Mansions forever. Then when she'd made her fortune with Airhead'n Breakfast she'd go on a campaign to close the shelters as a waste of taxes and drown the homeles in Lake Ontario for all she gave a fuck. She didn't drink lake water only Perrier.

She knew that Warfarin had acquired a status Baby Momma while living in the said shelter. That is, he'd sired a brat. It was a notch on his gun, on the barrel of it as it were. Upon Baby Poppa's departing the shelter and taking up residence in his highly Airhead'n Breakfastable unit, Baby Momma had found similar accommodation only in one of those atavistic prison towns that counterfeited pastoral virtue to the fallen nation. Everything was relative.

Could it be the Baby Momma was longsuffering, and lonely? Was she maybe even pining (not diverted by the troop of fatherhood-inclined thugs who'd also accompanied her to Cornhole-Bumfucksville, along with aforesaid brat)? Certainly, as Curly the Stooge was wont to say.

So maybe he should go to her, and stay....

Such was the power of suggestion....

Thing Street Asylum

Of course he wanted to come back especially late at night listening to the thugs screwing and carousing on his welfare check, and she wouldn't let him. She was making money....

*****

World War I effectively cancelled plans to finally move the Toronto Asylum from its increasingly unsatisfactory urban setting to a rural site at Whitby. As discussed by J.M. Forster, then Medical Superintendent of the Toronto Asylum, the original plan had involved the establishment of a Reception Hospital in the city, which would have become the Asylum's urban clinic (J.M. Forster, M.D., "Reception Hospitals for Cases of Mental Disease," Bulletin of the Ontario Hospitals for the Insane 7.3 (April, 1914), 127-31). In "closest touch and sympathy with the large Provincial Hospital outside" (129), it would have guaranteed "the hospitalization of the whole in the fullest sense of all that this means" (129). All patients, chronic as well as acute, would have enjoyed the benefits of clinical practice and innovation.

With the establishment of a shabby temporary Reception Hospital in May of 1914, the indefinite postponement of plans to move the Asylum with the transformation of the Whitby facility into a military hospital in 1916, and moreover the reopening of Clarke's own clinic at the Toronto General Hospital in 1914, the city was left with two clinics, operating in very different contexts. While the Toronto Reception Hospital should have become, as Forster idealistically described it, the single urban clinic of a unified hospital system, the existence of Clarke's clinic and (more importantly) the continuous urban presence of the Toronto Asylum actually laid the foundations for the virtually two-tiered system that prevails today.

*****

The Curse of Mental Health was $CAMH Psychiatry. Once a year there was an orgy of psycho-babble hosted by Hell Telephony. He proposed this year they talk about the Apotex Affair (Alternative Title: "Barry, don't go! Don't go, Barry!" Memorable Quotes Famous LastWords: “Barry, you left the light on by the pool again!" "Honey, I'm a billionaire! I'll leave the lights on in the whole City if I want! Then I'll send'em the hydrobill and when they can’t pay I'll foreclose on'em and all Toronto will be mine!").

Their realtor discovered them hanging by the pool in the basement of their mansion. The cops hinted at murder-suicide, although they'd been strangled before they were hung. Weeks later the Thing Street Mirror announced what everyone already believed, that it was a contract job. Two weeks after that, Trixie Zane announced the anonymous windfall of 100 million loonies at The Compound on Thing Street and $CAMH Foundation CEO Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre was so overcome she farted while raving it was rocket fuel for Mental Hell.

None of which was reassuring on Thing Street or made any difference for streetphotography, but he had a theory who the donor was. It mad sense. Gangster to gangster though Trixie impressed him as more of a moll, one criminal organization to another then. Now Dr Rat Brain could trade up his C64 for a supercomputer to replace schizophrenics with. Who did the hit? Why, Dr Rat Brain of course!.

While CEO and Communicator of the Year Catherine Zahn babbled to the billionaireWeiner King. Moon Shots! New Trajectories! Beyond the Moon!

What about the Earth, Trixie? What about $CAMH West or any other of your sublunary operations? You should straddle one of your own rockets like Dr Strangelove and FIRE yourself where your interests lie - obviously not with us.

Who cared? That was haters talking.

*****

Cruising south on Ozztown in his powder-blue Lincoln, passing rows of low-fronted FOUL FRANCHISES and CRUMMY HABERDASHERIES, Citizen Hearse scanned the horizon where fifty years before the dome of Thing Street had glittered in the setting sun.

Praetorius had tried to save it during the TRANSFORMATION, but had inadvertently blown it up, when the dynamite he'd intended to loosen it from its moorings launched it instead, like a rocket, into a portion of the beloved WALL.

He must have mined it with explosives, like the laboratory at the conclusion of Bride of Frankenstein. Fortunately C. Lamprini Eel caught the entire debacle on tape, for his DIME MUSEUM. Citizen Hearse forgot how many times he'd viewed it, each time with unbridled joy.

He wasn't thinking about Asylum towers however, or of Mitzi riding beside him with his SON, Krakpotkin between them.

He’d been selling fags to Hacky Dan for Tylenol money. His hair stood up straight like a startled Rastafarian’s. His speech was slurred. He stank. He was becoming the man he wanted to be.

Pioneers of Alienation

He was their POSTERBOY!

He was thinking about WHITE SQUIRRELS.

*****

How Donut Girl Hated Realtors like Poison but Wanted them like Crack

Lowla Lowrents saw through Donut Girl's sugary glaze to the dough beneath. She never let Donut Girl forget her hole. She stared into her eyes like raisins (with too many sprinkles) communicating directly with her emptiness the way her bed'n breakfasts communicated with the toilet.

Bosstone Creme, she ordered. Then Tim Bitz.

With her skimmings from Parkdale Mansions Donut Girl purchased an old prayer ground from the Indians and renamed it Paradise Camp. She considered it a sustainable developmen otherwise unbearable. For an extortionate fee OCAD hipsters filmed Wacousta screwing buck-naked on the forest floor to a narrative by Margaret Atwood. Yes, unbearable!

Lowla Lowrents had heard all about the Donut's schemes. So had the United Nations!

Lowla Lowrents chauffeured the Donut Girl all over Greater Bumfucksville looking for bungalows full of poor people for Donut Girl to exploit. She hated poor people and pensioners especially. Donut Girl would have evicted her own father - especially.

Inexplicably while waiting at Jeff Robber's Flake Hotel for their coco lattes the topic of Native Development came up. Perhaps the connection was Jeff Robber's vast oil wealth, or Bosstone Creme's pomade, or Tim Bitz' unction. At any rate when someone observed that Alberta natives sat on an even greater slick in the Badlands, Lowla suggested that they move. With a portion of their take they could certainly afford to.

At which Donut Girl winced noticeably, and thrust her little palm in Lowla's face in a deprecating gesture characteristic of Girl Fascists operating Concentration Camps. Ooo, she lisped. That's sooo waysist!

Lowla knew about Paradise Camp however, and the virtual wampum she got it with.

Jeff Robber smacked her broad backside. Thatta Grrrl! Hog to sow....

*****

Johnny wanted the new Mental Hell and Addictions Counselor to beware of the big GORILLAS lining up outside his door for free TTC tokens. They'd scalp them. Throw them a SHOVEL!

He noticed the 2 new "locum" shrinks. They were so clever at $CAMH. They knew all the WORDS. He looked up "locum" - he thought it meant CHEAP TEMPS. Anyone was cheaper than the BLUEBOOK regulars. They made Albert Schwietzer look cheap!

It was increasingly opaque to him what $CAMH was really doing if anything. Their so-called "news" so-called "letter" emphasized screening for schizophrenia and smoking. The screening for schizophrenia was mainly done by labs through lab reports on samples. So he assumed this amounted to writing a lot of lab requests and sending experiemental subject "forms in hand" over to the labs on Rancidvale for further PROCESSING. So who was really doing the work? Not $CAMH - not Dr. Praetorious. He was just the referral service. It was DWIGHT FRYE!

So what ELSE WEREN'T THEY DOING at the $CAMH? Anti-smoking?! But everyone's doing THIS - especially $CAMH over at Queen and Ossington - principally because they're ON THE TAKE from PFIZER makers of suicide and rage-inducing CHAMPIX. So that's VERY NICE, $CAMH! Weren't SUICIDE AND RAGE are worse than SMOKING? So how much did PFIZER PAY THEM?!

ANYTHING ELSE?! Ah, the NEEDLE DISPOSAL UNIT! Fanning out through the alleys and byways of THING STREET in search of those proverbial needles in the haystack was definitely BLUEBOOK WORK. Fortunately there was a BIN on the front of the building. It worked for free. He meant REALLY WORKED, TOO! (Johnny stuffed it with copies of THING STREET ASYLUM.)

Anything ANYTHING - ELSE?! Well, they conducted a so-called SURVEY which was really a WHITE-WASH. He knew how they did it, too. They distributed the forms to their PALS - even though to Johnny they insisted they weren't his FRIENDS they were his CARE-GIVERS - and they were visibly marked - the FORMS were - like playing cards in a MARKED DECK - in case anybody felt like getting a little too candid for their taste. The results of the so-called SURVEY were a foregone conclusion, and totally false. The SURVEY said they're FRIENDLY, but the tone of their average so-called CARE-GIVER was limited to TWO SETTINGS: condescending UNCTION and TEETH-CLENCHING RAGE. At least some of the respondents appeared to actually LIKE their QUACKERY however - the acupuncture and the mindfulness (?!) especially, and the ridiculous counseling - which wasn't surprising.

Just for the record, they still hadn't made ANY improvements to the telephone system, which remained as silly and irrational as ever. Reminders for appointments came up $CAMH; all other calls were STEALTHY ANONYMOUS - how

come? What's the point of being STEALTHY when the reminder identifies you? Just asking! Don't get mad! UNCLENCH!

One more thing! Regarding that so-called MENTAL HELL AND ADDICTIONS counselor - he realized his caregivers probably NEEDED HELP DESPERATELY - considering the "mindfulness" and the rest of the flavor of the month shit didn't work - he just wished they'd get THEIR OWN counselors and LEAVE HIS ALONE! Maybe they needed to WORK IT OUT (there's a PHRASE!). Hey! They could probably BILL FOR IT.... etc.....

CIRCLE OF CARE? There was ANOTHER GOOD ONE....

People come. People go. Nothing ever happens at....

*****

She read the latest dirt on her. It said she was a greedy disgusting little narcissistic poser who had no insight or compassion or even intellectual curiosity about the people she exploited aside from their possession of all too little money.

Daddeee! It was all about her, and not the way she liked it. Daddee! She fairly shrieked when in another fit of rage she'd forced her thousand dollar lens and broken it because it was stupid and acted like she didn't know how to use the nasty thing making her cry because she was studying cameras at OCAD and didn't even have a thousand dollar lens like other Donut Girls and it wasn't her fault she violated the warranty and lied about that too!

She wanted to kill not just the writer but the whole alphabet in which he wrote these scurrilous untrue slanders - all about her! Hence the spelling mistakes. They were her way of getting back - and they came naturally, inspired by ignorance nurtured by twitter. Daddy's pride and masochistic enjoyment!

She insisted. She wasn't just a homelessness machine exploiting unprepossessing old people not gainfully employed by social media PR firms or the booming service industry - the post industrial military complex - neo-fascism in a word. She couldn't pound a nail straight, but it was no coincidence she did it for Hollywood. Her crooked nails were an even greater mainstay of delusion than her fingernails, but if no one was innocent as the punks sang there were still degrees of guilt to be determined and the Donut Class all jelly-filled and sprinkled looked highly culpable.

No, no she persevered. She was creating housing. For vegan hipster feebs....

*****

HARM REDUCTION?! There was always a Happyhooker but in most cases it was more harm than good. It means a slower fall to ADDICTION.

Oakridge and Yucca Flats worked harder than the $CAMH could possibly imagine - and they were full of the graduates of their harnreduction programs - alkies and junkies all. Citizen Hearse and Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre did a booming trade. Trixie Zane got a cut....

How about some honesty. Citizen Hearse encouraged his girls to MEET PEOPLE WHERE THEY WERE AT. His grammar was even worse than his DRUGS.

*****

Johnny thought they would have done better had their communications reflected the reality that they were writing not just to fellow criminals but to ordinary people who came to them for more than just words and who would have appreciated fewer and clearer words. When their language was counterfeit, meaningless and worthless, how could anyone think their healthcare was any better?

Johnny typically failed to consider that nobody cared about the quality of their healthcare, just the quality of their drugs.

I've given you some free advice, and I hope you apply it. Because I think you collectively have a big problem in that your board is not really representative of the community you're supposed to serve....

the derelicts, the rooming house transients, the ruined novices (Vixen Foxy Weasel-Theatre), the aging garret ephebes (Johnny), the faded catamites (Bruce and Butch), the pretty boys (Lance Dishlexy), the failed professors (Johnny again), the mountebank quacks (Joseph Workman and C. Lamprini Eel), the slumlords (Chuck Handy), the media moguls (Citizen Hearse), the corrupt workers (Trixie), the decadent peers (Trixie again)....

The Fall Guy, The Hero, The Victim, The Martyr, Christ, Osiris, Adonis, Corydon....
Thorazine Zombies slowly cake-walking down crummy, haunted Thing Street to Johnny's bankrupt Thing Store....

Pioneers of Alienation

Praetorius's URBAN VILLAGE looming over it like the fuck-palace of a sadistic New Age Commissar....

Worse, in its communications this community is merely talking to itself (again). I think it's obvious that you need to recruit more board members from outside the healthcare elite - you especially need to recruit the people you are supposed to serve. ...

Fellini, Butch, and the rest of the Old Gang....

I think it's equally obvious that you need to remove the academic jargon and corporate healthcare slang from your communications ("sustainability," "environmental scan," "systems leadership," "journey of understanding," "governance tool," "equity lens," "representation gap" (so ironic considering how non-representative your shoe-in "candidates" are!), "transformative learning" etc. - the recent material is thick with such cant - which shouldn't merit a D on Butch's undergraduate's term paper).

I don't think a phone-call would help this situation (I cannot spell it out any more), and it might even be counter-productive. It costs a quarter and I'm not on the Sunshine List.

Johnny was nearly overcome with the fumes from the human catpiss. Who went in that booth anyway? Cat Woman? Did women piss in phone booths?

O tempore! O mores!
He had been calling and calling for the last fifteen minutes.

Finally Johnny lost his patience. He rolled the dice. He let his call ring through.

Hello, hello, he said. To the silent ether.

He was wiped out....

Saying more - more openly - I run the risk of being stigmatized as at once a recipient and a critic of your services, which imperfect as they are - are all I have.

The wind created by all the suction of $CAMH at Thing and Ozztown down the street. It created a vacuums with its nothingness. Nature hated it, but not as much as Johnny. The slogans. The posters. No matter what was printed on them, they announced it was a totalitarian institution. Part of the neighborhood? All of it! Removing stigma? No, clients!

I have observed, after a few years of these, a tendency on the part of "care-givers" to be rushed....

Jack got the bum's rush for dancing the horn-pipe with 2 canes and his pace-maker on high....

To inadequately explain the terms of sometimes delicate arrangements (and therefore to violate them later)....

Conflict of interest and collusion with the manufacturers of antidepressants with which she kept Warfarin well-supplied, anticipating the day when the public would tire of keeping him alive and sooner pay for him dead....

To pay more attention to the computer and its operating system than to the client in front of them, to be either condescending or rude and insensitive to what you call the "lived experience" of illness and the social and economic hardships that accompany it, to promise not to label and then to do so the next time it's convenient, etc. - and to never admit their mistakes but to "circle the wagons" instead (in a travesty of the "circle of care").

The GRAND OPENING was his EXECUTION....

Which was why DADANIANS put up with the CONSTANT BULLSHIT of $CAMH. MAD PRIDE should have spoken up, but they were disordered FASCIST gangsters.

Max had co-opted them....

Butch always wanted to be a doctor.... a psycho-surgeon, to be precise....

Bruce was the TALL OAK.... broken on top....

Thing Street Asylum

They were peer support workers....

They had lived experience....

In Trixie's private MAD PRIDE SS GANGSTER ARMY, they were the first recruits....

I think one phrase sums up the problem - it's lack of empathy compounded by a bloated system that is increasingly opaque, totalitarian and - despite your allegiance to the left - fascist. I 'm not saying that care-givers ought to be "friends" (although I've noticed that some of your care-givers fall in and out of that role depending on convenience).

Johnny knew that if anybody'd threatened to dock her receipts by so much as 2% she'd have squealed like a stuck SOW. He noticed she was speaking through clenched teeth. It was a SIGN! That what she was saying was ABSOLUTELY TRUE! It also meant she was having difficulty with her role, because HE was SO STUPID. She would have been the Trixie Cavell of Yucca Flats by now, had it not been for his STUPIDITY making her want to muzzle thump him with her AK47. Why couldn't he see it? She was HERE for him!

I'm saying that they need to make a much greater effort of the imagination to understand and to feel however briefly and imperfectly a little of what their clients feel keenly all the time - what it is to be sick, poor, and desperate. If they could do this, some good might follow. They cannot do this trapped in privilege in a narrow sector of the system in a bubble of self-serving slogans. That is what I read in the package delivered to me this week.

Shit shit shit....

Doc Praetorius repeated hysterically, stabbing at the air, at the image of Johnny Boy that arose before him, really his own patient emerging from the anesthetic, which Trixie had improperly administered to begin with....

Fuck, said Doc Praetorius, after his episode. What's this cadaver doing here?

Must be some kinda weirdo, Trixie observed....

Doctors Trixie and Praetorius had things to do, places to go....

It was already after 6....

Garbage Night!

I know you'll dismiss me as PARANOID SCHIZOPHRENIC - but I'm sure you could do better.

Three of YOU will be schizophrenic!
The CURE?
See me NEXT year....

Butch was Santy....
He'd always wanted to be a.... Walmart Greeter!

*****

The face of Scamaitch Psychiatry in Porkdale Hogtown. One need say nothing more. One should say at least this much however. If one was a client of this hole, one had better count one's pin money on the way in, and then again on the way out. They'd been known to drink it.

What could one write about Scamaitch that would do it justice? Its ethos was fascist, because it was run by psychiatrists whose ethics, with some minor adjustment for the different historical times, would not have been inconsistent with NAZISM. In other words they demonstrably had none, only an empty will to power the copious propaganda for which told us absolutely NOTHING true about mental health, only how wonderful THEY were – especially Trixie Zane.

She never recognized that what she called mental illness was really a way of life, and the implications of this failure were catastrophic and genocidal. Trixie became a brain eater.

Porkdale had been one of the few places on earth where mad people had a wonderful and positive politico-cultural

identity. Where they mattered as people.

That is until Trixie Zane established the Brain Eaters in their concrete cult compound at Thing and Ozztown.

It was an eyesore, a crime scene disaster, a catastrophe for Hogland and Dadania in general and a virtual genocide for mad people in particular.

She called it a campus but it was a compound for poster people and cultists and brain scientists who'd make Dr Strangelove look like Albert Schweitzer. She'd rebuilt the walls bigger badder than ever. They were the are the tombstones of our hopes.

This clinic in Inner Pordale in which she performed braineater outreach was a mean nasty eyesore. Butch tried to read the cheapshit Xeroxed posters bossing clients from the copshop plategass door but it was small-type and of course he was largely illiterate having grown up reading the Universal Charter of Human Rights and crap like that. There was some client shit on the windows however which did not require have to be read. It was bad enough to think of the locos who had to hold their noses to pass this mess every day let alone the clients who had to enter this abattoir. There were even rumours they'd had to fire staff for drinking their clients' pin money.

Welcome to the Future of MentalHealth! It was here already. Shame total shame. The unchanged face of Mental Health / Mental Illness Thing West Scamaitch Archway Clinic Downtown West Lansdowne Jameson Parkdale Toronto. When Scamaitch CEO Catherine Zahn bragged about seismic breakthroughs every time she scored another hundred million she was merely shamelessly and outrageously lying. Behind her lying shrinks and corporate friends had constructed The Compound Ozztown Thing West.

It was to be avoided at all costs since it was plagued by all the worst characteristics of crummy state medicine. Principally the self-serving and feckless Mad Doctor Trixie Zane. The slut was incapable of genuine empathy because she hadn't any skin in the game. So she faked it. Masked her incompetence behind lip-service to flavor-of-the-month fads and fake diversity.

Her programs? Ha ha ha! She would have done better as a college basketball coach but probably not. Her harm reduction program didn't have a methadone doctor but it was a good place to go for a fix and moral support meaning gush. She was into mindfulness in a big way. How good of you to recommend you little friend! What friends are for!

Trixie's record-keeping was consistent with the practices of police state Albania like it used to me. Butch found out after he left that she never went to the trouble to write a case note instead she simply inserted everything into the record including emails phone-calls and video recording. Medical information wasn't prioritized just anything she could use to blackmail him. It was a violation of his Confidentiality Agreement! However if he'd bothered to look at the fine print he would have realized that it was really an information monopoly.

She usually got it wrong anyway. She was very friendly and kind till she actually had to do any work. Then watch out for her I'm not you're friend I'm your caregiver lecture. Like it was news. Of course it was a different story with the poster-people she exploited for good reviews. A noisome lot they were too! That explained Brother Heiz Fifty-Seven. Inevitably Trixie partnered with the worst the most venal social workers in the neighbourhood. Which explained Father Scotchtan. Clients who played along were better served which wasn't saying much but the sick and feeble-minded like Johnny would have done better at Joe's Garage.

Client-centered? Did it look it? Did it feel it?

Evidence based?! Was screaming about breakthroughs and cures for depression when all she was doing was playing with magnets scientific? It was garbage! He'd been betrayed!

One can easily imagine Butch's trepidation as he rang Trixie's chimes.

A mellifluous robotic voice sang where transforming lives then a deep husky voice enquired what he wanted.

Yeah? Whaddya want?

Dr Zane I need to see you!

Can't you see me during business hours? I'm drink er think er researching.

Dr Zane I'm having a crisis!

It's all in your brain!

Father Scotchtan sent me!

Why didn't you say so! I'll buzz you in.

He was amazed by the sudden transition from the crummy above-a-storefront façade with its xeoroxed messages and fresh-air posters to Dr Zane's posh pink silk-lied inner-sanctum like a cross between a ski lodge and a new age opium den. There was something to this transforming lives shtick after all. Money! Lots and lots of money.

He approached her chaise longue.

Closer young man. Look into my eyes.

It was hard to see her eyes for the enormous black-rimmed Hakim © knock-offs she was wearing.

Butch, he said.

How dare you!

No no! My name!

Ah, of course! I see by your gaze that you are honest. Stupid, I mean.

As the day is long.

Yeah, honest. Did you bring the brains?

Eh?

I'm jonesing for some fresh – talent young man! She puffed thoughtfully on the hookah that Butch suddenly heard gurgling under her chaise longue. That and the sibilance of the Thing Street Car they called the SS Schizophrenia made a strange symphony. The long tendrils of the setting sun streaked her purpe shadows.

Call me Trixie, Butch.

Dr Zee - er Trixie! Holy Father Scotchtan told me to give you this! He handed her the scrap of paper.

Trixie sighed. It was another no-brainer.

Here, she said. Take this prescription for super clozapine to Vina Pharm. Then bring the medication to Father Scotchtan. He knows how to apply it. And next time bring me a suitable brain OK?

O thank you Dr Zee – er Trixie! Sweetie's smart and he's my best friend! I'll bring him along next time!

Do that, Butch. Honestly, she sighed…. She went back to her reading. The publicity department said she read books like Death in Venice and Dr Faustus. She read 50 Shades of Grey as well as any cheap porn she could get her hands on.

*****

Want a coffee, Baby Doll? Father Scotchtan stood beside the enormous gleaming samovar.

I just wanna get high, whined Trixie. Won't somebody gimme a fix?

We've evolved immensely, lisped Father Scotchtan. He was certainly scamming a lot more money.

Fifty years ago I served my first coffee, he continued. Now I'm serving you, Baby Doll.

He handed her a Styrofoam cup like it was the silver chalice. Salute, bitch! he murmured as she gingerly sipped the steaming liquid.

Ouchy! Ouchy! Baby Doll said. It was hot and it was poisoned she realized as she fell to the floor kicking and screaming.

There were many ways to work miracles. Scotchtan gave her a fix.

*****

Heinz! Escort Baby Doll to the model suite! Don't be afraid, Baby! Heinz is your friend. I believe he even likes you!

*****

He heard Baby Doll's cries on Death Row with the doors opening into one another. Exhausting their stinks into one another. And their screams.

Brad-leee! The name she called him in her delusions. Had she woven him into their fabric so far? Did she really mean him? Seemed so.

He resisted going out. She was sprawled in her doorway leaning out into Death Row crying Brad-leee! She'd stop then start up again after a while. He was glad in a way she'd forgotten his real name since the neighbors didn't know she meant him. So embarrassing. He loved her but what the fuck did she want? And who was Brad anyway? Obviously she'd been a prostitute or a moll or something and wanted to be again. Like it was her role getting fucked for money and giving it all to some jerk. Like there was something wrong with her or with with the world or both if she wasn't getting exploited. That would explain the cable TV episode. Pressing those bills on him a whole handful when all he did was make a phone call to the cable company. They told him to try changing the batteries in her remote control. That worked.

Couldn't Scotchtan give her something? O yeah! He already had!

Finally he went. She was sprawled head first out the door and hollering Brad Leee-eee-eee!

Shaddup bitch! He loved her but enough was enough. What was wrong anyway? Wasn't she satisfied she cops were off her back? He peaked around the door and saw everything was. Wrong.

O Brad! Will you get me a drink of water? Like she hadn't been calling him all morning. I think my leg is broken. Ankle, he thought. Definitely at least sprained. She had a dirty bandage on her left ankle. There were dirty pots and dishes all over the floor with a lot of sheets. Looked like she hadn't been using the bed. He didn't notice her TV a big fat tube model nearly broke his back moving for Scotchtan. She'd sold it or Small Potatoes had pawned it for drugs. He went in and she dragged herself in after him half closing the door. He found a dirty coffee mug in the dirty sink. He rinsed it and let the water run to draw it cold. He handed it to her on the dirty floor.

Thanks Brad, she murmured. She took a big drink and handed the glass back to him. Can you fill it with some more? Just leave it so I don't have to get up. He filled the glass again and set it on the floor beside her. She was wearing white pajamas. Dirty, of course

Jim Eeeeee! Front me for some tylenol! My leg hurts! O-o-o-oh!

The black eyes made her look like a raccoon. You been in a fight, bitch?

No, Bradlee! she whined like he'd accused her of being bad for getting beat up. Probably Small Potatoes.

Please, Brad! she persisted. Get me a little tyleno OK?

No! and stop calling me Brad!

He knew better than to loan anyone anything at Murder Robinson. He'd read Lonewolf's blog. He knew. Baby Doll wanted the codeine in Tylenol 1s.

He went back to his cell and brought her some ibuprophen that he'd bought at Dollarama ©. He told her they were Percocet's. Take two every four hours no more! he warned her knowing he was wasting his breath she take the whole bottle as soon as he left.

Thanks Brad! I mean Butch!

Back in his cell he remembered the little plastic wafer of dessicant packed with the pills and started to worry. What if she swallowed that too and choked to death? Would they blame Brad Leee? Or Butch!

He went back to her unit and knocked on her door.

Come in, she said.

He told her he wanted to check the bottle of pills he'd just given her.

O Brad! She whined thinking he'd decided to take away the pills.

There's something I forgot to remove.

Brad! I don't know where they are! I think they rolled under the cupboard.

She'd hidden them in her crack. He thought of warning her not to swallow the dessicant but she'd started to fondle his leg and why waste his breath. He got out of there fast.

Small Potatoes had been watching from Death Row. Their frame-up had failed.

Who was Brad? Just a stitch in her delusional fabric. She'd obviously dropped more than a stitch or two.

*****

I brought you some cereal from the food bank.

O thank you Heinz! I love Cheerios ©. Where do you live, Heinz?

Assisted housing.

Where do you come from?

The Hotel! There was a fire! I wrote a song about it!

I want to be your friend, Heinz! Tell me who you really are.

I was Heinz 57 now I hold a position of a much higher order.

I presume you take your orders from that thing on your back.

There's nothing on my back, he insisted despite the obvious hump.

You spread like a disease! Some vile plague from the corruption of the earth!

Our social order is pure innocence. We shall force upom Porkdale a life free from strife and turmoil. Do not be scared!

Scared? I'd be lying if I said I wasn't scared.

*****

You dig the new member don't you Heinz!

New members old members. Nobody matters in the House of Scotchtan, Father. He was a bit of a member himself.

Some less than others, Heinz. I trust you have made her comfortable in our model suite?

Yes, Father.

I trust you've told her about the beauties of national socialism?

Of course, Father. However she prefers to watch cartoons.

They're always lumpen at first, Heinz. Look at the sunny side of life.

He had literally through the keyhole. Heinz was a voyeur. Being Father Scotchtan's factotum had given him plenty to see. He smiled thinking about it.

Lovely smile, Heinz! Don't you have any work to do?

*****

Bird Woman must have been talking to Sweetie about him. He was watching her through the spy-glass and overheard her tell her housekeeper that he was scary like that. Meaning spying on her through his door. The stupid hitch must have believed Sweetie's lies that he was always at his meaning Sweetie's door with his camera pressed up against the crack taking pictures of him and his little boy. She believed him. He was scared for belittle boy. His little boy. Wasn't even his. Maybe his sister's and he wasn't little either. While he was obviously a minor he was so big and fat Jonkky thought he was probably diabetic. Later after the kid hadn't been around for a while Johnny heard

Sweetie tossing boxes in to the garbage closet. Boxes and boxes of Junior's cereal. All artificially flavored sugary wheat confections. That and no exercise except when Sweetie used him for cover when he went out at night to buy drugs on Thing Street. No wonder the kid was fat and sick. No doubt Sweetie'd told her the kid wasn't around out of concern for his safety. Bird Woman believed him. She'd believe anything if it was nasty enough. Bitch!

The air-conditioner and the so-called jazz station playing the same best-offs over and over and his tablet tuned to Sean Hannity raving about the mob and the media and the crime wave in Chicago and New York City and the virus science was going to kill with hydroxychloroquine. Soothing cacophony. Now Sean was peddling a sleep remedy derived from cannabis. Good relief! Immediately assuring everybody. It won't get you high! After all it was a right wing station. Suddenly the jazz station was playing a sappy version of Chaplin's Smile. After all it was a jazz station. Smile wasn't jazz. It was sappy like Chaplin. Could you imagine a scat version? He preferred the air-conditioner. White noise was soothing.

It was a day for old people. He heard a Struldbrugg's cane tap-tapping against the tiles somewhere down Death Row. It had to be a Struldbrugg. No human beings made such noise. He was obviously enjoying himself. Itself? He'd vary the rhythm just enough to disappoint his expectation. The Tease! Then he'd resume tap-tapping. He was going from door to door looking for someone. He heard him outside the Bird Woman's. He must have met her in the hall on her way to the pigeons because she definitely wouldn't have answered the door. Johnny heard her yacking away saying it was probably that guy. At first he thought she meant himself. Figured she'd blab about him because he hadn't offered her any empathy when she'd bitched about her mail. She'd complained about the way the mailman circled her address on her envelopes because he was defacing her private property. He'd refused to side with her that time so now she'd turn him in if given the opportunity. Maybe the opportunity had presented itself. However when the man knocked on his own door he turned around immediately to face Sweetie's door. Sweetie was probably the guy he was looking for. Not to buy his lousy Injuns probably to complain about him. Maybe for slamming his door shaking the building every time he sauntered off down Death Row to swindle Griselda. Which was often. Johnny and Bird Woman were just corroboration. Of course Johnny still didn't answer. He watched as the intruder gave up and proceeded down the hall to the next door and Sweetie poked his bald head out his door and peered after him wondering why he hadn't got a knock. Johnny would give him a knock all right.

He went out through the parking lot. The main entrance on the circular driveway of the Irish remittance man's Big House wasn't safe. Bums from Thing Street congregated there and sold drugs. Then there were the old gossips who scrutinized everyone who passed and made rude remarks. Club Meds. The parking lot wasn't great either but it was away from Thing Street. Fewer bums and no Welcome Wagon. It was better lit and there was usually a cop car there with a cop in it or at least a special constable. Entering through the parking lot today however he had to pass through a gang of motorized senile delinquents waiting for their elevator. A fat Slavic woman in Capri pants blocked his way on her scooter. He'd seen her before complaining about Sweetie. He said excuse me but with a circular motion of her pinky she indicated that she wanted him to go around. That passed him off. After all she was the one on the scooter. So he abruptly squeezed by her while her social worker looked on.

*****

Dash was socializing with the members of Club Meds on the patch of parched grass beside the Irish imposter's circular drive. They watched as an ebony personnel manager in a black sports utility with tinted windows peeled rubber drive around then sped off to Thing Street. The driveway was a favorite spot for that and for waiting to make drug deals. The Struldbruggs didn't deal much because they were so exceedingly cheap and mean it was impossible to come to turns with them let alone make honour their agreements. The few personnel managers who dealt with them usually got badly burnt.

Club Meds was the Rubber Factory's answer to Welcome Wagon. The members were hostile and rude to pedestrians. They didn't hesitate to comment on everyone's appearance by insulting it. If they saw somebody had just been shopping they eyed his bags greedily and wanted to know what was in them. Because they wanted what was in them. Whatever it was they wanted it. They could have charged toll. They felt like it. Most of them were already motorized just like the cops only subtler and meaner. They sat all day on their chariots watching for suitable targets for hit and run.

Nobody knew what most of them did in real life. Probably nothing. Their ring leader was a retired schoolteacher the worst sort of person. He must have recognized something in common with Johnny. Like they were brothers in awefulness. He had a big hard for him and antagonize him every opportunity. He called him Smiley. He said he was gaining weight. After Johnny cut his hair he wanted to know if he had cancer. He looked like he was getting radiation treatments.

Edwin was the second in command of Club Meds. He used to be a superintendent in a real apartment building not a Rubber Factory compound. He was almost as bad as the failed schoolteacher. He hated Murder Housing. He said they'd never had a real superintendent. One who did rounds. He'd done them every day. It was a fact that in the Rubber Factory one might see management in one's part of the compound for months at a time. Yet if he went to the office to complain about a sickening smell or a broken door the superintendent would always protest that he'd just been there a quarter hour ago and everything was fine. It was generally a good idea to take a picture or otherwise document the problem and bring it along. Or risk being dismissed as just another dementia case.

Pioneers of Alienation

Dash sat barefoot on the grass at the feet of Club Meds. He was wearing short shorts. His calves shone in the sun like ivory. Johnny passed by. Usually Dash totally ignored him but for some reason today he acknowledged him by asking him why he always wore black. Same reason you never wear socks, Johnny said. It cuts down laundry. Johnny beat it before Teacher could comment on his coifure but Teacher was interested in higher things.

Like girls, Dash?

Oh yes! enthused Dash. Some of my best friends are girls.

Nice girls, Dash?

Real nice!

Not like those skanks right there! Teacher indicated Baby Doll and Lachrymose Laurie who right at that very moment were ascending the Irish reprobate's circular driveway. They noticed Club Meds. Hey hey! The gangs all here. Edwin, Teacher, Kamikaze Dotard, and Dash especially.

Those guys are talking about us, said Baby.

Those guys? Laurie guffawed. They ain't ever giving us a hard.

Hard what? As usual Baby did not comprehend.

Look, Laurie said taking the easy way out.

Look at what? Baby liked to watch at least if there was anything worth looking at.

Fuck, said Laurie. They must be gay or something.

Maybe they're married, said suggested Baby.

What difference would that make? A very good question for which Baby had no ready answer. Club Meds was discussing that very topic which was curious and synchronous too.

You're a nice guy Dash. It'd be a shame if you went and got married....

He doesn't come around like he used to. Maybe he's married already....

Everyone of us was married at one time or another, said the former superman. Everyone of us regrets it too!

We figured out how to avoid marriage, said Kamikaze Dotard high atop the saddle-throne of his chariot, with a nudge nudge wink wink like he was letting Dash in on a deep dark secret.

Buggery!

*****

Not like it used to be. The internet was why nobody got good and interesting junk any more. The prices for what they did get were too high. Clothing used to be a deal but one coud get cheaper jeans new from Walmart and T-shirts in Chinatown for a lot less. The atmosphere was crummy without any upside. The stores has all the negatives of Porkdale the meanness and the stress without any compensation like a good deal or some fun. The staff almost all seemed like very nice people but they were obviously harried caught between the old and the new Parkdale like everyone else.

Gutta-percha was the first internet. The cables it shielded under the sea were the network of globalism. It came by ship from Java through Singapore to London then went out again by ship from Ireland to Newfoundland. It was located beside train tracks the way the internet was later. It required globalism and it created it too until it and both exhausted in World War II. It was very big business. Babbitt traded it based on the data it provided via ticker tape and cable then relaxed putting a golf ball filled with it. Like his root canal.

*****

He liked to fantasize about nuns. After all they were part of the Rubber Factory. Part of the rubber economy. They got the women whose Johns got them pregnant because they didn't wear rubbers. So in a way they were against

rubbers. The fewer rubbers, the more unwed mothers. Rubbers were bad for business. However in a subtler way they were for them. The Sisters were part of a system of belief that encouraged the use of condoms by making it shameful to get knocked up if you weren't married and impossible to get a job except as a hooker or a laundress. Which is where they came in. Being a hooker would have been fun while it lasted but at the price of eternal damnation. Rubbers created the world of sin the eternal damnation for which the nuns wanted to save women from forever and ever. They had a love hate relationship with rubber albeit unconscious.

They looked like the Flying Nun on 70s television. Their uniforms were severely black and white. Their starched collars stood erect like vampire bat-wings. They marched slowly back and forth in military formation from the outlying laundry barracks to the Big House twenty times a day escorting the hapless women balling and ripping clumps of their red hair out in the middle of their grim phalanx. The lead nun had enormous hooters and carried a whip that she cracked from time to time as they sang life's good but not fair at all. The sign over the massive portcullis said some girls just wanna have fun. They'd burn in Hell though.

Late in evening the Sisters stood singly casting long India Rubber shadows under the trees and gazing as the sun sank behind the water tower of the Provincial Lunatic Asylum like nothing so much as an angry red phallus inflamed by unpardonable sinning and visible for miles. About which there was something very Toronto he just couldn't quite identify.

In Toronto shelters there were candy bowls filled with rubbers as if for Halloween. Trick and treat. They did somewhat resemble suckers only without the stem. Non-residents rang the doorbellbell door of the former City office where tax payers used to go to pay their tickets. Came upstairs and helped themselves. By the handful. They didn't pay taxes or parking tickets either. They just paid. Women and girls. Abandoned. Unhealthy. There were 70 of them locked up in Parkdale's Magdalen Asylum for Fallen Women established in Irish conman O'Hara's West Lodge estate in 1876. The Residents of the Roman Catholic Institution were counted in the census as a basis for Parkdale's incorporation then totally forgotten. People did remember sending laundry out to the Magdalen Asylum on West Lodge. In 1911 it was called the Monastery of Our Lady of Charity and housed 134 delinquent women and feeble-minded girls to be reformed by the Sisters in charge, converted and protected. There was also an Industrial School for 29 girls age 12 to 18. They were enrolled for 3 year terms by their parents, betrayed by friends, turned in by police, and sentenced by inspectors of prisons. The Charities Commission granted them $500 annually noting that the bitches were a contented happy lot and their rooms were clean and bright and well-ventilated. The Good Shepherd Female Refuge on West Lodge Avenue. Reclaiming the guilty and preventing those in danger, protecting the feeble minded. The Sisters of Our Lady of Charity. Superior Sister M. St. Patrick. Secretary Sister M. St. Ignatius. Superintendent Rev. P. J. Bench.

There were urban legends about the Demon Nuns of West Lodge. They were sighted especially on Halloween under the same trees they'd stood under alive. They could equally have been residents and vice versa Johnny was sure that some he'd taken for residents were actually ghosts. There was the stranger's wheeling a cart full of scrap metal through the parking lot. Johnny waved his cell phone and the man cringed and snarled at him not to take his picture. Johnny looked away and continued out of the parking lot. When he turned around the man had vanished along with his cart. He'd never seen him before. He never saw him again. Then there was a very elderly woman in a long black dress and a black scarf. She met him one afternoon when he was heading out on Death Row and asked him to please take her flowers. She held them out to him. They were dead all right and they stank. He took them assuming she was too old and infirm to take them herself. He proceeded down the hall with them but when he turned at the exit to look at her she had gone. He hadn't heard her footsteps or her door slamming shut as doors always did on Death Row. Today another woman stopped him in the hall and asked him to take her table. He thanked her but explained that he didn't have room for her table. She smiled and faded. They were nuns and that man was their gardener. Ghosts all of them.

They made women make men use condoms. It was that or get pregnant and get married though not necessarily in that order. If you didn't get married the Sisters got your kid and put you to work in their laundry.

*****

He actually found the street addresses of the Rubber Factory in Porkdale. 127 to 165 West Lodge and 138 to 148 O'Hara. There was also Gutta Percha and Rubber Ltd at 114 O'Hara according to an information circular from 1968. All those addresses were now either ugly late Victorian duplexes or the even uglier Rubber Factory apartments. He thought they were mainly the latter, since it now looked over the ends of both streets.

He wondered if the residents worked in the factory. They probably did later, when the houses were no longer new and the neighborhood had started to decline. Now supposedly it was rising again but it wasn't real. Many of the houses had been gentrified and rented out over the internet to people who would never see the inside of a factory except in picture books. They didn't make anything except possibly copy and they carried enormous debt.

The trains still ran behind the Rubber Apartments where the Factory used to be. They were commuter trains however, and the passengers wrote copy and wore synthetics. They stopped downtown and at points west. He wondered when the last load of Gutta Percha was.

When the Plague struck the trains nearly stopped altogether. After all it was decades since they'd carried anything useful or anyone who knew how to use it. It was as if the system had been running along the same tracks literally and figuratively as when full but on empty. Sometime it had to stop. Like now but not now.

Pioneers of Alienation

The conduits remained but they'd been repurposed. That was one way of putting it. They'd also been somewhat trivialized as their purpose was now almost entirely recreational. That was all very well but somebody had to work. When somebody in China got fed up with working for nothing so Americans could recreate on weekends beside the tracks they used to commute to advertising firm.

There was the face of a woman in a cowl like a nun on the rear wall of a gallery that had been a Coffee Time and still looked like one. Too many big empty plate glass windows and an empty parking lot. Empty art too he supposed. From the overpass he observed one large warehouse that dominated the horizons like an Egyptian obelisk. That was the new Dadadian Museum of Contemporary Art. It looked even emptier.

The beginning of the rail path was under the overpass covered in graffiti half hidden by bushes. Spud it said. Tease said the side of a warehouse further along. Then a very square converted factory or warehouse had been freshly painted with big white letters that said Scythes and Company Scyco Cotton Wiping Waste Wool Packing Waste Cotton Wipers Oiled Clothing Canvas Goods Flake Commissary. Scyco psycho? Leave it to the Flake to ruin it for everyone.

The industry had gone to China decades ago. The Plague had come back. Many of the commuters weren't commuting any more. There was nothing to advertise and nobody was buying. The trains were on time but they were empty. Maybe they'd stop altogether or the factories would come back too so the trains could carry rubber again. Not very likely. Most likely everything would stop.

*****

Now everyone had to wear a mask at Murder Housing. The rules didn't specify what kind of mask, so inmates just put on anything they could find. Johnny hadn't thought it possible but nept dealers, welfare cheats and petty crooks looked stupider than ever wearing old socks dish clouts and rags on their faces.

Johnny and The Manikin looked worst of all. In an especially cheap model that they gave out free in supermarkets, M resembled no less a potentate that the Premier Sinister of Dadania. Even without the scrap of rubberized Kleenex © like a contraceptive on his mouth he strikingly resembled the Great Twatsky. Now he could replace him. Given Twatsky's heinous misadventures with certain meretricious childrens' charities the stolen Christmas Toys the extortion racket in the Unwed Mothers' Refuge etc it wasn't advisable.

They talked about Smiley the Gringo the Presidential Contender. Smiley couldn't address a simple question without getting offended. The friendly black TV anchorman asked Smiley if he thought he should take an intelligence test. After all the Grand Incumbent had called him retarded. Smiley's handlers must have anticipated the question and coached him how to respond. Unfortunately Smiley had memory problems maybe even Alzheimer's so he forgot his lessons. He equated this perfectly reasonable question with asking the friendly black anchorman if he'd done crack cocaine before the show. Hey man! Are you a junkie?

That didn't go over very well so the Gringo tried the common touch for which he was notorious. Especially touching the women in his entourage and sticking his nose in their hair while smiling the whole time.

Come on man, he said to the friendly black alderman just like they were bros. Then he flashed his trademark grin. At least his dental work was sound.

Smiley was obviously no statesman.

Johnny noted the freshly pressed blue suit the crisp white shirt and of course the dental work and had to disagree. What more could you want?

Four more years of bullshit.

Then the fire alarm went off. Quasimodo thought maybe they should go but Johnny said nobody ever went in a fire alarm they just waited for the firemen. it was somebody's cooking probably Small Potatoes again.

He looked around his apartment for an explanation. The walls were plaster but underneath the plaster cinder blocks. The floor was tile over concrete. It shook like a little when Mr Peepee lumbered out of bed to piss. When he screwed Baby Doll it was like a minor earthquake in a fault zone. The aftershocks were endless but t least it didn't creak. The wiring to recent fixtures like and including the neon lights was encased in square tubing that ran around the walls rather than through them because the walls were solid concrete like the floor. It was a dump a cell a ground-level Fuhrer Bunker but it was practically fire-proof.

They heard the siren and soon the red light shone through his blue curtains. There was the fire truck. The station was only one street west and two blocks north. They should have had an outpost right at the Rubber Factory they came so often. Pealing rubber in the Irish con-man's circular driveway.

Johnny said Small Potatoes just cost Housing another five bills.

It was just the City billing the City, Quasimodo explained. And it was most likely ten bills. He knew because the firemen came to his house last week and he got the bill yesterday. He got a call from his tenant at 12:30 A.M. that the fire alarm was ringing and he couldn't make it stop. He asked the young man if he'd set it off. The young man never answered the question but said the fire detectors were very sensitive and he'd already called the Fire Department. He'd obviously done something.

Johnny asked M how old the young man was. He was a hipster away from home for the first time. Anyone else would at least have known how to stop a smoke alarm from ringing.

One took a piece of cardboard and fanned it.

Quasimodo wondered why people wouldn't admit it when they did something wrong.

Johnny suggested the $1000 fine had something to do with it.

They were discussing Trixie. She'd been Johnny's so-called Care Giver till he fired her for refusing to acknowledge his masterpiece. So what if it was a masterpiece only to him, the printing cost money. She could at least have acknowledged the print job.

Quasimodo thanked his stars he never had Trixie Zane for a doctor. He'd heard things about her. Dark things! Like the time she groped Lance his friend with the matinee idol looks. Then she invited him to her Care Circle.

Johnny said at least he never had that problem. He was old and ugly. Besides, he was a faggot.

It could happen to anyone, Quasimodo suggested.

But it wouldn't mean anything.

It didn't mean anything anyway. Johnny told him about the time he was afraid he was going to lose his pension unless he let her label him a schizo and she gave him the bum's rush because she wanted to do a demonstration in her Maila Nurmi outfit with the black tendrils. She just shrugged. So his income was about to be halved. She'd have screamed bloody murder if they'd docked hers just 5%.

And what about those three-month vacations to Limey Land? She'd even bragged about them. Weren't they nice? Rubbing it in.

Quasimodo said her problem was she didn't have any empathy. None. Zero. She was working on a pension application for another friend of his. At the end of the process she turned to him and said of course everyone gets denied the first time. Putting her hand on his thigh. Of course if he'd like to come to their Care Circle he was welcome.

It was like she already knew because she'd screwed it up deliberately.

They heard Baby Doll shouting at a fireman. She'd left her pot on the stove again and the fireman was balling her. After all it was Saturday.

Johnny had the same experience. The shrink turned to him from the letter Trixie'd written to the Ministry of Stealth and Despair. He asked if Johnny'd already mailed it. He had, but he could get it back. Forget it, said the shrink. We'll just work around her. So she'd screwed up his own application too, only she'd got caught.

That's how it was for losers. They shared treats from the dollarstore. Cookies came on huge container ships all the way from Turkey just for them. It was economy of scale. Globalism for losers. There were enough losers willing to chip in to buy the whole shipment and make it worthwhile.

They discussed social issues from the standpoint of the dregs. Johnny sometimes flattered himself that they hadn't always been the dregs but he knew it wasn't true. He'd always been really low and when he appeared to all the world to be rising that was when he felt especially uneasy because he knew and not even deep down it wasn't right it couldn't last he was sunk.

Sanctuary!

*****

He never answered the phone unless he recognized the number or was expecting a delivery. He used occasionally to answer an unknown number but it was always a scammer pretending to be the Justice Department and demanding money or he'd send him to jail immediately. He'd hear the robotic pause and hang up as the deeply resonant and rather bossy voice began its speel. What kind of loser made such obviously fraudulent recordings. Out of work porn stars? Failed Shakespearean hams? Use computer salesmen?

*****

Joe smiled wanly to himself. Calling up old buddies to offer them their long-lost Nigerian uncle's intestate oil fortune in exchange for all their personal banking information was one compensation surely the only one of getting a job in a call centre. Alas his good buddies never picked up. They totally ignored him!

*****

In the case of deliveries it was always the Amazing Delivery Man. He'd replaced the postman the same way the Amazing Company had replaced the government. The Amazing Man and Pistachio Man were the god heroes of the Rubber Factory. Johnny had been expecting the Amazing Delivery Man when the phone rang so he picked up. It was him.

He was at the door only the wrong door. Although the address was clearly marked outside, delivery men routinely got confused. There was Rubber Factory I and Rubber Factory II. Number I was a high-rise right where the Magdalene Asylum had been the Refuge for loose women who got pregnant formerly the Irish con-man's Big House

(same thing). Number II was a low-rise extension built in the early 60s in what must have been the airing court. He hoped his double in Number I who sometimes got his parcels liked cameras because they were all he ordered.

He entered the courtyard and saw the Amazing Company's delivery van in front of the wrong building. Rubber Factory I. He I lived in Rubber Factory II. He walked over just as the young man he assumed was the driver was about to phone him. You're Amazing, right? Johnny asked him. He was. He had a parcel for him.

When he turned to go back to Rubber Factory II he saw Sweetie with a minor walking slowly up the concrete ramp to the front door and considered going the long way around through Rubber Factory I but changed his mind. After all he lived there. He wanted everyone to remember even or perhaps especially Sweetie. Somebody lived there. This was somebody's home. His! Johnny Guy's!

The pair paused at the door to use the intercom. Johnny said excuse me and opened it with his fob. He heard the minor snicker behind him. He was a fat bespectacled Asian kid probably pre-diebetic from all that cereal. Sweetie had no doubt been feeding him and coaching him to hate Johnny too. They paused a rather long time before continuing. Too long! Sweetie giving a refresher course.

That him! That Johnny Guy! Always at door! Take picture clicky-click! Get Daddy kicked out! Daddy make money selling honky jiggy cigs. For Little Boy education! Get ahead in Big World! Be next Grand Incumbent. Sky's the limit! Johnny Guy spoil everything like poison gas cloud. Take rich daddy-girl Baby Doll!

Daddy! He look funny. He crazy man! Why no like Daddy have Daddy Girl? Why Daddy why?

Give jiggy ciggy free! First pack always free! Daddy good man! For the people! Johnny Guy bad sick man! Have black cat. Eat little boy!

Daddy! Scary like that!

Me call cops. Tell scare me and little boy. He big guy!

*****

First give them full membership. Then rebuild their lives. Call it transforming lives if you like but we all know what it means. Sweetie was a fine example. Society gets rid of its undesirables. Brilliant Scotchtan! Trouble is we're running out of members. And lives.

Scotchtan nodded glumly.

The Minister continued. To cut to the quick. I believe you're partnering with that woman again over at the Asylum. I warned you about that before.

I merely assist her, Excellency. With her cure rate. I keep the cure rate high and the readmissions low. I intervene as it were with the revolving door. I make the cures permanent. They never come back.

That is what concerns me, Father.

*****

I plan to assemble a human being using parts and organs from different cadavers.

You mean under the sponsorship of some medical institution!

No! Right here! At PORC dropin!

I shall bring forth a perfectly normal human being able to walk among normal people undetected.

A youth. Whom I shall instruct and control….

I don't know that I'm cut out for social work. You made me believe you were writing a book….

*****

You know I'm going to miss you!

As your nurse?

As your devoted friend.

Lover!

I thought that we could work together at PORC so we could be together. Closely.

Baby! She styled herself scientist optimist but more than anything W.O.M.A.N. woman!

What I create I must control.

Trixie Zane!

*****

Father Scotchtan praised the fuckover saying he and Trixie Zane would take the last vestiges of the Asylum the custodial attitudes and the exploitation of people who are diffent and apply them to a Welfare Hotel. However the way he put it to the press was he was on the right track by making an assumption of recovery for his clients he was able to create supportive environments that transform lives.

It was a model to fight stigma, he continued smiling cynically to himself. Like he wasn't going to slap it right back on worse than ever.

He wanted to make his clients feel they didn't pay an extra price for mental illness. That was really too rich! Like he didn't gouge them at every opportunity. And PORC presented a lot of opportunities….

Transforming lives? No! Live ones!

He was going to open the Asylum to the neighborhood and make the neighborhood open to the Asylum.

Part of the neighborhood? No! All of it!

Beautiful spaces are important especially when you're nuts, he babbled. And PORC is such a place, he added after unsuccessfully suppressing a huge fart. Single malt gave him gas….

Under his New Age Glasnost lurked a Soviet Block throwback. PORC!

*****

He noticed someone waiting outside the Army of the Damned Thrift Store but he thought she was just window shopping so he went ahead to enter the store. He was stopped by the tall black man in work boots. The man carried the by now familiar bottle of hand sanitizer. He reminded Johnny of a priest dispensing unction. He told Johnny they already had the maximum number of people they allowed in the store at one time. He'd have to wait. So the woman hadn't been window-shopping. She was waiting. He apologized for his mistake and got in line behind the woman. It wasn't a long wait.

One customer left, and the black man let the woman ahead of Johnny in. Another left, and he let Johnny in. While waiting Johnny had noticed the sign about the procedure. The number of customers at any one time had been limited to 21. That made Johnny the 21st customer. It was a sign! There was nothing in the Damned Thrift Store worth waiting for.

The disgusting bottom-feeding regulars either hadn't arrived yet or had been there already. That at least was auspicious.

Cueball was bald tall and bulky of indeterminate great age. Nobody kept records back that far. He had the profile of a brutal Roman senator or a NAZI war-criminal hiding from the MOSAD. His booming voice and hawk nose struck terror in the hearts of all the other dealers but they pretended to love him afraid he'd report their petty shop-lifting. Cueball missed nothing. He had dirt on everyone.

Fatman always wore a bright plaid shirt untucked to somewhat conceal his enormous girth. He usually sat down somewhere on the edge of the furniture section so he could get first pick of the fresh garbage as it came in. Johnny saw what he loaded into his shopping cart. It was the worst junk. Compact disks and vhs tapes and nick nacks. He wondered how he made any money. He suspected he didn't.

He didn't miss Cueball and Fatman. He missed Beautiful Joe. Beautiful Joe wasn't there much anymore after their big quarrel. Joe sought his shadow dogs and electronic eyes everywhere else.

Joe and Johnny had a Worthless World romance. They were both failures buts from different walks of life. Even a failed computer salesman was impressive to Johnny, and that's what Joe was. To self-taught Joe any doctorate was impressive, and that's what Johnny had. The worst cheapest doctorate one could possibly imagine, a thrift store doctorate a Worthless World diploma in a Dollarama frame straight from Montage U. Such a document was a passport to oblivion a visa to work in Hell (Lethe Bridge Alberta).

*****

Johnny had vague memories of Beautifu Joe leaping into the twenty-five cent book bin in the loco Godwill before the charity tanked. Joe was athletic but short so jumping in made more sense than trying to reach in, but Joe liked to immerse himself in garbage. His fully-clothed trash bath. Years later Johnny started spotting Joe's fine features at Worthless World. His black hair was turning grey at the temples and he had a gut. Still his eyes glowed when he sat on the floor of the thrift store with his records piled on his lap and he ogled the ankles of the lady shoppers. He said marriage hadn't slowed him down.

Joe often had a child with him too a little girl who was obviously impatient with her father's passion for records. Johnny watched Joe in short-shorts his black-haired calves slightly sun-burnt. Joe stretched like a dwarf basketball player to reach the vinyl records on the very top shelf and his daughter started screaming. Joe would stopped and shoved the into his cart with his records. One day she'd inherit a great record collection, after marriage slowed him down.

Joe came with his daughter more and more often. Then came by himself. Johnny and Joe started to hang out together. They didn't understand what they did for a living. Johnny didn't know anything about computers but he understood they were being replaced by so-called smart phones making Joe's job somewhat redundant and indeed Joe himself. Joe didn't understand academics at all especially failed ones like Johnny. Joe though Johnny was on some sort of extended sabbatical but Johnny knew it was forever and he could never go back and he didn't want to anyway.

Joe used to worry about what people thought at Worthless World. Because at first he came by himself then with his daughter they'd think his marriage was on the rocks. Then when he started coming with Johnny they'd think he was a fag. They were bottom feeders. Nobody cared about them. They themselves didn't give a fuck. Joe did because

he was crazy. Johnny never understood why Joe cared what Worthless Worldlings thought. They thought nothing at all.

Johnny thought he should at least try to get Joe on the dole with all the other crazies like and including himself. He explained the situation to Big Nurse. Joe's wife had a teaching job at Pork U. Big Nurse laughed in his face. Joe's wife made more money at Pork U than Johnny could possibly imagine.

Joe had warned him about the rich bolshies from Pork University. They squatted in huge suburban bungalows decorated with effigies of Che Guevara and Salvatore Allende. When Johnny told him about Carlos Gardel how his plane flew into a mountain and they all died except for one guitar player Joe said good they were probably his wife's people always bugging him about what he was going to do after he lost his job. What was Plan B they wanted to know. Plan B was what Charlie Manson dreamed up.

Cueball and Joe were rivals. Joe must have been nervous about Johnny's queerness, because he told him if Cueball ever asked to say he was just helping him look for records. It wasn't love. Even then he was afraid of losing the Worthless World equivalent of street credibility. Joe was really a very fragile person. Morbidly sensitive.

Johnny sensed that especially after he phoned him drunk one evening. Joe sent him pictures of his favorite mid-century modern junk all purchased from loco Godwills and Worthless World garbage dumps. He had especially nice turn-tables and radios. They reminded him of the world of the 70s and 80s. Joe started to cry in the middle of a text message. When corporations cared. Johnny had never thought of the 70s and 80s as the Golden Age of Caring. Then Johnny was either an impoverished student or a mendicant teacher but Joe had been a stud a computer salesman in a boom.

Joe mocked their fellow Worldings. He'd given them their monikers. Cueball and Fatman and Mighty Muff and Hairy Harry Carey and Mental Melmoth the Maunderer. Mighty Muff and Hairy Harry were even greater rivals than Joe and Cueball. They were bitter enemies. The Muff wore gym shorts and white diabetes socks. She lived with a big white parrot and sometimes brought it with her to Worthless World to impress the bottom feeders.

Rumor had it that the Muff had once been busted for trying to steal a stereo by hiding it in the bottom of her shopping cart. At check-out she attempted to distract the cashier by drawing attention to how cute her parrot was etc. As she wheeled away the cashier noticed the unpaid-for item and called security. They stopped her in the parking lot.

Joe said Johnny should go for Mighty Muff. She was hairier than Harry ha ha. Johnny forgot how morbidly sensitive Joe was and suggested they should go for each other instead. Joe said he really wasn't interested. Johnny persisted. Go for it Joe! You want it! You really really want it! Then Johnny asked him if he knew how to text and jerk off at the same time.

Joe said that's it isn't it. Adieu then. He'd always known. Johnny was a risk.

*****

Butch had him over to his unit in the Thing Street extension. The one with a door knocker. Old English too. Butch showed him his custom-made pedo-bait toot-a-loo stick with bicycle horn and bell attached, his children's train set, his expensive computer game console, his confederate flag, his rock poster. He told Johnny they were door-prizes but Johnny knew. It was all the garbage he'd shoplifted from Thing Stores on Thing Street West.

*****

Johnny heard the Old Bugger bumming fags off Small Potatoes. The first one was free. He'd never repay him anyway. A big red NO SMOKING sign had appeared on his door just a few days ago. It featured a picture of a huge mushroom cloud. The old bugger had already forgotten the warning. He'd blow himself up first.

Old Bugger was typical. He knew he was going to croak soon so he made the best of it. Johnny once gave him an old coffee pot and some coffee beans. Old Bugger said he'd remember him in his will. He said so to everyone. They said the same thing back. They'd get back everything they'd ever sponged or borrowed. The dumpster would.

*****

Johnny picked the garbage in front of a nice old house on a side street. It must have belonged to a hipster dj because there was a bag full of audio cables and adapters. He scored a weird-looking amplifier for headphones a sleek chrome water pitcher from a bar and best of all a jar full of pennies. He took them home to examine them and was pleased to see so many of them were from the United States the broken promised land with the face of Lincoln the Great Liberator on every one.

The Bolshies had already abolished the penny and were well on the way to abolishing money altogether since its anonymity was incompatible with the aims of their Stazi to know everything.

How to repurpose pennies that was the question.

*****

Thing Street Asylum

Young blacks swarmed the grounds on scooters every other Monday morning cutting the grass for old whites. They whipped up all kinds of garbage remnants of drug kits and old rubbers while Superman drove the floor waxer up and down Death Row. Johnny trod softly to the Lobby to get his check stubs from Stealth and Despair. He heard Bird Woman's cutlery tapping her china like a bell tolling. They were condemned people enjoying their Last Supper if one could put it that way. One just did. How was Angel anyway?

*****

Trashy canlit turned up in Free Libraries outside gentrified houses on NDP Street....
Pegg Allwood's latest perpetration....

Warning! The holdings of the Porkdale Branch of the Hogland Public Library included many controversial books but none if Dr Zane don't like it.

As for Johnny's expose of her latest fascist brain scams, the brain-dead zombies she'd trepanned aimlessly wandering one end of Thing West to the other, Dr Zane don't like it. They usually in fact went west! young man! into the setting sun and PORK and never came back. It was a one-way bad-trip.

Dr Zane definitely disliked his unflattering depiction of her as the bullshitting mouthpiece of MentalHealth Fascism. However, whether they moved her to action or moved her to tears, the following books left her changed forever. They are as relevant today as when they were first shat out the rectum of Pegg Allwood.

Surviving My Bush, Foxy-Wild Forever, and Wifey.

Johnny had offered Miranda the Librarian his expensive self-published crap free! Weeks later when they still hadn't appeared in the loco history section besides Phil I Stines images of pasteurized diversity he opened an invesitigation.

Miranda met him at the take-out counter beside odorous stacks of Allwood's latest. She threw his books in his face. Bookmarked in fifty different places where Scamaitch CEO Trixie Zane don't like it. So many bookmarks made a fringe.

*****

My name is Lynn. I'm a writer. I ran away. From Mississauga!
Does anyone know you're here?
My friends don't even know such places exist. I didn't know till recently, she sighed
Do you wish to be transformed?
O! That would be lovely!
Go with Scotchtan, Child!

*****

Lynn slowly opened her heavy-lidded eyes and looked around. She appeared to be in a ski-lodge decorated with 60s macramé and spirit catchers over an especially rough section of Thing Street West. Then she remembered.

Father Scotchtan.... Coffee....
It was true. There really was something in the water. The Rubber Factory....
She'd missed the communal supper....
The reason I slept through everything was because (sob) I never intended to wake up at all. I tried to kill myself....
But why should a girl like you?
I could be anything. A thief a murderer.... a hipster!
Hipsters! An army of machines incapable of pain fear or compassion. And practically indestructible....
There's gotta be a human element somewhere.
Don't count on it! They behave like automatons. So far they've made no effort to break out of the city.

*****

You've been vile to me ever since I told you I was a vegan.
You are a fool and a narcissistic poser, said Trixie. She liked that, being no mean poser hersef.
How dare you impugn my beliefs!
You have no beliefs, hypocrite! Just an empty will to power bred of self-love and conceit. Get a dog, bitch. Frankie lives!
Frank! Frank! Where is he? What have you done with him?
He's right here, she assured her. Tapping an elephant-sized hypo!

I didn't think I had that much to drink!

Pioneers of Alienation

*****

Lynn painfully rose to her Fluvog-clad feet to look out the window.

Those things out there are bad enough in broad daylight. It's gonna be dark soon....

Do you have to do that? They'd think you were in a cage the way you circle around. She hadn't realized she'd been pacing. She stopped.

Something's gone wrong I know it. If anything should happen to Frank I'd never forgive myself....

*****

She was happy to lead their new writing group in ever greater flights of praise for Scotchtan and Zane, those wonderful change agents transforming lives, so long as she got to see Frank several times a day. She did so happily in her conviction that pretty soon she'd be joining him forever. And it was a happy circumstance that the hitherto laureate of serial killers and prize fighters should become an apologist for the mental hygiene of the future.

Trixie tasteded her cerebellum. Another heavy cannabis user. Her green hair made hers really stand out among all the other heads. Outstanding!

Can Litters were such potheads ha ha ha!

*****

Dash Vina was the Free Delivery at the so-called Community Drugstore. Unfortunately for Dash the neighborhood was Porkdale. That meant the Rubber Factory. That meant PORK Drop-Inn and Father Scotchtan and his factotum Heinz with the bad teeth and the 60s pony tail and the Braineater Clinic and Trixie Zane and Butch and Sweetie and Small Potatoes etc....

It was not a pretty Drug Store. The proprietor employed a rotating crew from a stable at Pharmacy School but the cashiers were tough no-nonsense broads. The tattoos on their muscular forearms said Mother and She-Wolf.

Shoplifters preferred the Pillbox to the fancy new Drug Mart down Thing Street. When they stole Sleepeze © from the Drug Mart the mean little nazi of a security guard saw them do it on the TV set in his office. He waited for them at the front door which he'd already locked electronically. Then escorted them into his office to record their names and addresses. He called the cops only as an afterthought a formality. He wanted the thieves' names and addresses for the extortion racket he was running. The cops would give them a warning but the Drug Mart would blackmail them.

After getting dunned by the Drug Mart the shoplifters would stick to Dash's Pillbox where things were more direct. They'd get caught by the cashiers who'd tell them to return the Sleepeze © they just stole and get the Hell out and never come back. No extortion, no bs. No inoperative scam that was just wasting everyone's time. Of course the Pillbox was slated for destruction to be replaced by yet another ugly condo like the Tim Horton's next door.

For now Dash sat behind the counter luxuriating in his young manhood. There was a lull in deliveries. It was a slow late summer Friday afternoon on Thing West in Porkdale. His shoulders slumped under the wife-beater he wore and he dozed a little. He wore sneakers with holes in them over his big toes. He never wore socks. That saved on laundry and besides socks looked ridiculous with short-shorts. He had corpse feet. He was twenty-four and getting busty with what the French call embonpoint or bitch tits. His weekend had already begun. He was stoned.

Dash luxuriated in his young manhood. Indeed he looked somewhat stoned and post-coital

There was a lull in deliveries. It was a typically slow late summer Friday afternoon in Porkdale. Dash relaxed behind the counter. His weekend had already begun. His shoulders slumped under the wife-beater he wore and he even dozed a little. He was twenty-four and beginning to put on weight. He was getting busty with the beginnings of what the French call embonpoint bitch tits.

Scotchtan noticed the dirty sneakers visible under the counter. There was a hole over each big toe. Looked like he didn't trim his nails or wear socks either. Or wash a lot....

Looks like your weekend has already begun, son.

Yeah.... Indeed Dash looked stoned post-coital and sated like he'd just done vigorously pleasuring himself and now felt at once fulfilled and depleted somewhat foolish and very smug. Which annoyed Scotchtan immensely since he hated to be left out of anything pleasurable.

Yes sir! corrected Scotchtan. In the Old Country they teach mannerisms.

Yeah.... That's why he left.

Here, have the pharmacist fill this prescription. Bring the drugs....

*****

His Asian boss had inherited the Pillbox from his father. Johnny remembered the stocky old man in heavy black-framed glasses and white coat behind the counter. He'd dealt him once when a so-called mental health team had delivered a dosette to Hell House without the client's clozapine. The mistake would probably have been made by the

team, who should have seen that the meds were added at the hospital. Johnny had noticed the omission simply by the weight. It felt too light. He called the Pillbox and the old man drove over with the meds himself. He was an old school white-coater.

The old man reminded Johnny of the white-coated individual who stepped out from behind his bubbling fake lab apparatus to narrate the introduction of a sci-fi horror movie. The white coat meant he was a scientist. The glasses meant he did a lot of serious reading so he must be very learned. He was one big rhetorical fallacy.

So's your old man, Johnny thought. He was dressed up to narrate the sci-fi horror show of Hell House. Of course the meds he introduced were good. He was a scientist a polymath. Seriously. Johnny wondered what would have happened if he hadn't noticed the missing meds or if the old man hadn't bothered to replace them. Nothing in some cases. In other cases the affected client would have become a mad monster.

He'd had dealings with Junior too. His landlord's brother had a habit of eating Tylenol 1s by the handful for the codeine. It took a lot of Tylenol to get a codeine high. Unfortunately such quantities were toxic. Johnny visited all the loco drugstores to ask them not to sell Tylenol to his landlord's brother. He even gave them mugshots of the brother playing an air piano like a character in Caligari. Junior was the only pharmacist who gave him a hard time. Maybe he was being conscientious or maybe he would miss the Tylenol sales. Junior gave him a hard time till Johnny told him about his dealing with his old man. His father….

Once Johnny had asked junior to witness his rent review at Murder Housing. He read every page first before signing even though Johnny explained it was merely a formality. He was very punctilious. Now with the same painstaking attention to detail he handed Dash the Friday meds to deliver.

*****

Dash pressed his ear to the door. Old Bugger was watching a movie. He was deaf so he'd he'd turned the volume up loud. Dash could hear the soundtrack. He recognized it. "You think it's funny hu? You little schemer." Great dialogue. That was hairy-chested Dad in real life an-out-of-work porn star. If that was life. Maybe this way, Dash thought closing his eyes to visualize the scene. He'd just been toking too. "I know how to drive these things. Lighten up will you. Nobody's going to complain out here." That was the camp ground bitch wanting to drive the speed boat. The blond jock in the wife-beater didn't want to let her. "Come on! Please?" She made him. "Just for a minute." That was all it took. To decapitate hairy-chested Daddy on his way to the dock.

Old Bugger opened the door just in time for Dash to see Daddy's decapitated body float to the surface of Sleepaway Bay. The Dad he never had. Old Bugger turned down the volume just a little. Your meds, said Dash. Old Bugger liked to watch slasher movies on Viagra ©. It was his only recreation. Looking at all that fresh young chicken while waiting for Dash…. Almost got him hard…. "No such thing as being too young. Just too old." He invited Dash to come in sit down put his feet up etc but Dash declined. He was on to him and besides he had more Viagra © deliveries. Seemed half the Rubber Factory tuned into the Friday Night Slasher Theatre for the same reason. For Dash it wasn't reliving the 80s it was being there. He wasn't sad he'd missed them.

Dash paused outside Sweetie's unit and listened. Of course it was the same Slasher Movie Channel only a little further on at the start of the next kill. "See anything you like? Maybe I can help you decide. You sure are a sweet-looking little cupcake aint yuh! I think I got something you're gonna like real good…. " Dash knew what was coming. He closed his eyes again. He liked watching movies in the dark. Rikki interrupted Fatso just as the latter was undoing his pants to show her the goods. He watched as Fatso explained to the Director that he'd frightened the little girl. The kitchen staff looked guilty. They knew what had happened. Chef Fatso was boiling a huge pot of water to cook corn on the cob. Dash saw him climb up on a stool to add a dash of salt. "Boiling yet? Thatta girl! What the fuck do you think you're doing? Help me down or you're gonna kill me! Come on kid! Help me down and I'll make you a nice ice-cream sundae, OK?" Dash saw the little hand of the otherwise invisible person pull the step-ladder out from under the cursing chef causing him to fall pulling the boilding cauldron on top of himself. Dash had to knock hard to make himself heard over the scream on Sweetie's TV set. At last Sweetie turned it down ever so little and opened the door a crack. "Your meds!" "Ah my little bonbons! You want come in? Get high? Me and Baby Doll?" Again Dash declined the invitation this one a threesome. He had deliveries.

He arrived outside Butch's just in time for his favorite kill. He heard the screams as the hairy-chested stud jogged into his cabin and grabbed a girlie mag to read while he pinched one on the toilet. Dash closed his eyes and saw the broom handle jam the toilet stall shut and the hairy calves of the squatting jock. "Who is that? O playing games are we?" He saw the stud's legs as he rose to fend off the nest of angry hornets. "Hey get that thing out of here! Come on! Get it out! Help me somebody!"

Dash resolved he'd quit his job as soon as he'd saved enough money for a few months rent over the Pillbox. Dash appreciated that he and his customers shared similar tastes. The trouble was that they shared them from different perspectives. For Dash they were tastes still to be savored and enjoyed. For his customers they were tastes they'd already enjoyed or never would because they were over. Unfortunately his customers had no such insight. They thought they were still players.

*****

You've earned your reward.

My new face?

Exactly! Tonight I'm going to lead you out of this darkness. We'll go among people. You'll be able to pick the face that pleases you. Then it will be yours.

After I've grafted on your new face life will become fresh and exciting.

O boyoboy!

And maybe we'll find you a new brain too….

However it was a changed world after the Plague struck. The Plague wasn't exactly raging. It had moved outdoors onto the sidewalks. It was café society. Large tracts of the Thing Street had been roped off to accommodate vegans who would normally have stayed indoors. There weren't many of them. Most people preferred to stay home and order out.

Indeed many of them mail-ordered their specially prepared vegan meals from the Amazing Man long before the Plague was born.

There weren't many vegans on Thing Street. They passed carnivores. Real dinosaurs. There was one who looked like he'd been muff diving and some of it stuck to his face most of which was covered by a greasy hoodie which was a mercy. He had a rididulous looking cane with a cheap child's tricycle horn duck-taped to the handle. That had to be Butch. Dash barely acknowledged him. He hated meeting clients after work. They'd want to tell him about the Viagra © they great things it did for them and vice versa. Made him sick his skin crawl. Kind of stuff nobody put on his cv. Not fit for polite society or impolite either.

Not your type, Dash? Scotchtan was enjoying this.

Speaking of impolite society he noticed a real crazy looking scank trundling her walker into the Pillbox. She had her hair done up in a dirty pigtail and she was still in her pajamas athough it was getting dark. Dash recognized Baby Doll immediately and avoided her like the Plague even though there was one already on. She spotted him and started calling him Billy! Billy! for some inscrutable reason. Maybe another of her pimps was called Billy.

I won't even ask, said Scotchtan.

An elderly Asian in purple track-pants and a leisure sweater sauntered slowly out of the Vietnamese barbershop where he'd obviously just had his hair cut very short. Baby Doll nearly ran into her walker. He ogled her lasciviously. His brushcut made him hot. Sweetie! she called. He made a circular gesture with his smoking ciggy like he was sky-writing. |He'd see her around (cheque day). Dash noticed that he wore brown socks in plastic sandals. To Dash, who'd never worn socks once in his adult life, that was disgusting. He could keep his face not that he wanted it anyway it was so sour looking under all that fake bonhomie.

Then they passed someone who gave Dash pause. He was a tall meat-eater. He had black hair and heavy back-framed glasses from the 50s. He wore military fatigues open to the third button over a sparse black pelt. Dash noted the size thirteen feet in shower shoes and the muscular calvesat the end of lean lightly furred legs. He was wearing Capri pants.

He'd seen him before at the Godwill and at the No Frillies. He looked for army surplus items in big sizes. Dash started calling him Mr Big. He would look at sizes too big for himself just to stand close to Mr Big. He tried to engage him in conversation but it wasn't easy. He tried asking him if he came from the the Land of Giants. Were there many back home like him? That was outrageously tacky. Mr Big smiled and asked him how he was. He had a nice baritone voice.

Dash endeavoured another come-on. Must be hard finding anything big enough.

Yeah, said Mr Big. Too small! He was holding a pair of size 11 runners. For my kid brother.

Dash asked him if he was a soldier or a cop. The army fatigues and the short haircut made him think so.

No, said Mr Big. My dealer thought so too. It used to make trouble for me when I tried to buy pot.

Then Dash realized that even Mr Big was a typical loco a degenerate pothead junkie just like everyone else only big.

It's because I see you here during the day, Dash explained. I figured you were doing shift work. Like a cop.

I work in the service industry, said Mr Big. I'm a chef.

Dash imagined him in a Chef Boyardee © turban. He'd be positively Assyrian! That explained why he was always around. Another victim of the Plague.

Dash snapped out of his reverie and turned to Father Scotchtan.

That one?

That one!

*****

Lynn was talking to Father Scotchtan about the trouble she was having with Dash. Father Scotchtan assured her. There was no reason why she and Dash couldn't adopt.

Adopt?! But what about kids of our own?

Father Scotchtan insisted. There's no reason you and Dash can't adopt half a dozen.... juvenile delinquents.... at PORK!!!

Lynn why don't you have Dash come in and see me?

*****

Dash Honey I've been to see Father Scotchtan.
Yeah? About what???
To find out if I can get pregnant.
And?
I can Dash!
Well hooray! So what's the problem?
I'm not getting it!
Oh....
Where you come in so to speak.
Dash Father Scotchtan wants you to pay him a visit at PORK.

No problem. I'll drop in some noon hour for the free lunch.

*****

Dash brought a little friend into the shelter. He was wearing a mask. There were holes in the sides for air. Dash wanted to take him directly into the basement but Lynn had been getting her free lunch in a Styrofoam tray when she spotted him. Yo, she said. She thought Dash was hot. His sockless orphan look. Who's this?

She blocked his way to the cellar and pulled off the muzzle. But Dash, she said. I already have a son of a bitch of my own!

What do you mean?

Frankie! A real dog!

It was supposed to be a surprise, Dash explained. To celebrate the publication of your sonnet sequence to Max the Butcher.

He doesn't seem very friendly. The mutt was snarling, snapping his jaws and lunging at her.

He was cute and friendly in the store, Dash explained.

What's the mutt's name?

Frank Jr!

Frank Jr we're going for a ride. You go back upstairs. I'll take care of Frank Jr all right.

That night Father Scotchtan served his clients frank'n beans.

*****

Lynn stared at Dash.

What is that thing on the back of your neck?

There's nothing on the back of my neck. What is that thing on the back of your neck?

There's nothing on the back of my neck.

They were about to have a lovers' quarrel when it came to them in a flash. There was something on the back of both their necks.

Do you mind if I take a look?

Not if you don't....

The thing was bucktoothed. It attached itself to the central nervous system of hipster posers. When its fangs withdrew it injected their brains with acid. Twenty to twenty-four hours later the trip was over for good.

They were parasites. All of them. That meant they needed something to live on. On their own most parasites would die. Why didn't they settle on animals that's the rub. They wanted more than just life. They tried animals through ignorance. They didn't understand earthly forms. They didn't know which animal including man was best suited for this environment. Oorangutangs? Coelacanths?

So they experimented trial and error. That showed they could think. These things took over a man's mind he became a robot a machine taking orders. Except it didn't show on the outside. A victim acted normally. They hadn't moved into Porkdale in force yet. Once the locos found out where they nested, they'd get the jump on them.

Braineaters!

*****

Sweetie got himself the sweetest brush-cut over at the Tibetan barber-shop where he picked up his ciggies.

You got a girlfriend or something, boss?

Sweetie liked it when other crooks called him boss. Like he was a wise guy. Don Sweetie! Gotta white girl! Sweetie growled. Swine to swine. Tough guy!

Heinz 57 was at Murder Housing hammering up posters for macramé workshops at the Open University.

Pioneers of Alienation

Heinz heard them going at it on Death Row. Baby Doll's giggles alternated with screams as Small Potatoes alternated with Sweetie. They were having a go at her. Both of them. It was an orgy of frigging and cigging.
Heinz crept closer.

Baby! Menthol or Plain?
I like plain, Sweetie.
I'm a Menthol Man myself, said Small Potatoes.
Menthol was code for blow job. Sweetie liked it plain. He wasn't very imaginative. Baby Doll wasn't imaginative at all.
Heinz liked to watch people smoke but not with Baby Doll.

He just stand there. What is he? Gay or something?
Maybe he married ha ha, Sweetie suggested. That never slowed him down.

Such a nice guy! Shame it has to happen to him! Two strokes and Small Potatoes was in the celestial truck garden.

Get away from me you rousy retard. He transformed his ls whenever he got excited. As he was now.

Boom! Boom! Out go the lights!

Rights? I got rights right her! Cheap cheap!

That wasn't what he meant.

*****

Upon bludgeoning Sweetie and Small Potatoes to death Heinz boarded the Thing Car but unfortunately with all the fun and excitement he forgot to deposit his fare or to wipe the brains off the hammer he was still carrying. It was just his luck that when the driver radioed for help PCs Kim and James were right behind them in their shiny batmobile. They boarded the car and spotting the hammer immediately shot Heinz dead.

Father Scotchtan found a moniker for his hotel. The Candy Factory! In honour of Sweetie of course. However Heinz Fifty-Seven and Small Potatoes were equally martyrs of social work and pioneers of social change so there would be suites named after them.
The Mongrel Room! The Banger!

*****

He that felt that he was drifting. He used to work for a theme, but the theme didn't work for him any more. The city had changed because of The Plague, and was continuing to change. He just didn't know exactly what the change was or how big it was, so he didn't know what he was photographing any more only that it wasn't the same. Invasion of the Body Snatchers, via coronavirus.....
All Johnny's hot spots were closed with Xeroxed posters on the door announcing that they were all in it together whatever that meant. The few that were open had replaced the posters with ones announcing the fact, like it was now the biggest deal. The Portuguese butcher had the longest line-up. He gave out free surgical masks to all his customers. Johnny used to buy five pounds of hamburger and have him bag it in one pound portions so he could freeze it. After the pandemic struck and people started hoarding hamburger and toilet paper, the prize went up from two to three dollars a pound. Johnny considered it profiteering and took his hamburger business to the No Frillies and FreshCop. He paid more but at least it was the same price as before the disaster. He was stupid but he had principles.
He couldn't stand Thing Street any more. He'd always hated it but he tolerated it as long as he made money off it. Especially on Check Day when all the loonies flocked to his Thing Store. Now even the Vegans couldn't make money, and they were the best cons. They'd annexed the whole strip, plastering it with storefronts like theatre marquis, instead of the names of grind house movies slogans like and including it's not your milk and animals don't need us. Just what you'd expect from a ringleader who claimed his cat taught him how to be a Vegan. Their faux Versailles drawing rooms with the fake marble mantlepieces were empty. Johnny liked them better as dollar stores. They'd be dollar stores again. The lucky ones....
He didn't even venture into the Thing Street dollar stores. Not after that time with Baby Doll. Early in the morning the guard with the snow-white beard hadn't come on duty yet. She got kicked out of some crack house early in the morning and wandered into the first joint that was open looking for trouble. She was still stoned from whatever she had last night. Baby Doll wanted a red tinfoil party hat and two chocolate bars for breakfast but she didn't have enough money to pay for them. She was dunning begging it from the other customers in line. She'd cough and sniffle and get very close to them like she was trying to infect them with the Plague so they'd give her some money just to get

rid of her. Johnny wouldn't give her anything but let her go ahead of him to the cashier. Some opportunist who'd just donated said she was with the crack-whore so she had to go ahead too. Ever the gentleman Johnny said no and told her to keep her social distance.

Baby Doll still didn't have enough dough for her garbage. She told the cashier to put it aside. She'd come back after she got some more form her man. She pointed to a wasted junkie who was toking up with another panhandler on the sidewalk at the entrance. Butch! The crack-whore returned just a Johnny arrived at the cashier's. She ostentatiously panted on him as she passed. She was giving him the Plague for not giving her any money. He paid and promised himself never to go back to that Thing Street dollar store, at least not until there was a vaccine for it.

Now when Johnny needed cat litter he went to the dollar store on Dungass. He avoided Thing Street and walked through the grounds of the old Rubber Factory. It felt nostalgic with the pneumatic drills pulverizing the concrete walls of the old high-rise building where the meth lab blew up last year. Johnny remembered Amanda who used to live there with her two illegitimate chidren. In fact most of the women who used to lived there were named Amanda or Samantha or Lovejoy. All their children would be dealers by now. How time flew.…

They all got the boot from Global Capital along with a whole lot of Scotchtan's other clients.…

Returning from the dollar store with his cat litter he passed under a railroad bridge that hadn't changed much since 1910. It had the functional ugliness that still characterized so much of the city from the years when the residents actually made things that worked. Sure it was ugly but at least it worked and they did too. Now there was more graffiti denouncing cops Jews and bankers. They usual trinity. He climbed a flight of concrete stairs to the street the Rubber Factory had originally been on. He couldn't think of why else anyone would have bothered to build a staircase there since the street was otherwise totally insignificant. The stairs must have been for the rubber workers.

At the top of the short flight of stairs on the left was a row of 19th century houses interspersed with a few more recent constructions and on the right was a vacant grassy lot bordered by a row of very old and gnarly trees. They must have surrounded a large structure at least as old probably a factory building or a warehouse. There was one two-story rectangular brick building that looked like all that remained of the Gutta Percha and Rubber Manufacturing Company of Hogland. It was painted grey and had been converted into lofts. The ugly high-rise in the background was half empty, rows of balconies like they'd been in a fight and lost it and got a black eye. They were being converted into lofts too. The pneumatic drills screamed all day long making the remaining residents nervous.

*****

He imagined long long trains from Singapore pulling into the siding behind the Rubber Works at Dungass and Beastly, bulging brimful with gutta percha.… They arrived endlessly, one load no sooner stopped when another began. Endless gutta percha till Word War II and synethics came along.… It was a glow-ball world.…

*****

The Rubber Factory haunted the neighbourhood on Worst Lodge Drive just north of the Irish remittance man's Big House. The land must have been part of his demesne before it was deeded to the Factory with free water and a tax break. He could tell where it had been by the space at the end of the crummy street. The two-story duplexes with their peaked roofs stopped suddenly at what must have been the factory gate. There was a park with a basketball court that was unused and a vegetable garden that was untended because people were afraid of catching The Plague. The trains still ran behind the garden screened by rows of trees and a wall but they didn't stop and there wasn't any gutta percha. There was an empty parking garage where the loading dock had been beside an enormous cathedral of a low-income high-rise that loomed over the houses and a large vacant lot rimmed with ancient trees.

Music came from the high-rise but it wasn't organ music. The drills screamed intermittently from units under renovation. He passed a very old bespectacled man with long grey hair and a beard. He was carrying a couple of No Frillies grocery bags. He looked like a tenant, a lifer. He understood that the lifers weren't really for life. They were the ones getting evicted. He wondered how they managed to stay with all the noise. Why they wanted to anyway. Half the time the elevators didn't work, and it was a very high high-rise. The Rubber Factory never made belts that long. He got a kink trying to look up. Sometimes there wasn't any heat or water. He figured the water was still polluted sixty years after the last rubber by all the chemicals they used in their processes. That would have explained why the low-income lifers like the one from the No Frillies got crazier the longer they lived there. Something in the water.

That explained Sweetie, Bird Woman, Small Potatoes et alia however nothing could excuse them.

*****

Stuff it in! Cram it!

*****

Pioneers of Alienation

$CAMH FOUNDATION CHAIR VIXEN FOXY WEASEL-THEATRE....
The CHARLATAN CHALLENGE for BRAIN DISEASE FASCISM - really HEATS UP!

This being a $CAMH event, there aren't any RULES.
We welcome bribes. We want them! Sigh for them, cry for them - the bigger the better.
However, don't be surprised if we renege on the deal you paid for....
We're $CAMH - remember?!
We're rich cock-sucking mother-fuckers who exploiting Mental Hell as an excuse to tie one on, get high, and run amok....
We are called $CAMH ENGAGE HELLFIRE CLUB but UNITED WAY was already using that monniker (privately, of course).
Not everyone gets to be a CONTENDER. Many are called but few are chosen. Actually we don't ever call - we just choose.
We're blatantly biased in favor of BRAIN DISEASE CHARLATANS.
True, we include a few care-givers - but you will notice that even these are....
FAKES....
Theoreticians of care - and you can believe us when we say they never let PRACTICE get in the way of THEORY - if you follow. We wouldn't let them!

All our decisions are totally ARBITRARY, TYRANNICAL, PERVERSE, ABSOLUTE, and IRREVOCABLE.
We've cleaned up our act considerably.
We don't hate Jews anymore, and many of us are Jews. We hate MAD PEOPLE, and want to eradicate them not just by CURING them, but by TRANSFORMING HUMAN NATURE.
While we talk big - using terms like VIBRANT, ARTISTIC, BOLD, etc. - our real values are represented by the NEW THING STREET - UGLY, DULL, STERILE, MERCENARY, PHILISTINE.

CEO Trixie Zane is our GREAT LEADER. She is inspired by money and power, free from every-day limitations of evidence-based Mental Hell. Her statements are amazing and oracular ....

Her very farts....

Across the lifespan....
Around the world....

You are SCUM!
Believe! Probably ALL of you are schizophrenic.

You can fuck off and die, for all we care. Meanwhile it is our constant endeavor to remove the buden of stigma from your worthless carcasses - of fecklessness, sloth, hereditary taint, and moral degeneracy.
Because we are a NOBLE ENTERPRISE and that is what we do, remove stigma - even from worthless SHIT....

Like you, but NOT you.

ALL of YOU are SCHIZOPHRENIC!

We prize DULLNESS!
An insipid, beaming, stupidly healthy POSTERBOY is worth a MILLION BUCKS to us! The WHOLE WORLD!
Butch! (And Bruce....)

We're NAZIS!
We're BACK!

*****

$CAMH CEO Trixie Zane knew by now that a lot of money didn't mean a cure for mental illness, since with all the millions she'd made fun-raising and getting paid to lie they couldn't come up with a better scam than the old "sponsor me to stay up all night" shtick they used last year and stole from a Hollywood movie about dance marathons.

Thing Street Asylum

With all their dough they were intellectually bankrupt. Yet they keep asking everybody to give them money, so they can cure everyone. What was more amazing or pathetic was that some people still did - send them money! Maybe some people always would.

They clearly favored the all-night marathon format, but they should have varied it just a little.

How about sponsoring the husbands and lovers and same-sex (male) partners of SCAMH supporters not merely to stay up but to keep it up all night- or at least as long as they could! They could have called it ONE HARD NIGHT, which would have been racy while still striking the empathetic note, acknowledging that with mental illness life wasn't all fun and games.

Just as it was harder to keep it up than to stay up, the sponsorship rewards should have been commensurately greater. They could have scored extra dollars by selling teasers and super-teasers (porn) to the hard-on challenged. $CAMH supporters (bad pun intended) could have posed for them, and knowing their narcissism they would have. Maybe Catherine Zahn and Darrell Louise Gregersen could have been imposed on sufficiently to donate a few candid shots - and they must have had a lot of Viagra lying around half-opened after they closed their gender identity clinic.

What to call it though? The first all-out nighter that dared to get it up and HOLD IT THERE - for mental illness?

*****

Donut Girl Shows the Stuff of which Queen West is Made....

Donut Dad told Donut Girl to be kind to the flake, and say - hi there!

Donut Dad was a stale old cruller bidding his Little Lemon Tart to be polite to the worst-behaved cream puff of the rudest Donut Shop in the Parkdale Ghetto. He was Catherine Zahn warning the Fat Kaiser Roll she was escorting up Queen West not to provoke one particular fruitcake when they encountered him on Thing Street, because while he looked like a mousse he was a perfect tartar!

Now, when he wanted to be let alone, she suddenly remembered Donut Dad's advice.

Hey Flake, she bellowed. She didn't wait for his answer. He had just enough time to notice that she was really putting on the pounds, and she was gone. Her even heavier sire waddled up behind her, grinning like the psychotic he was.

Donut Dad knew Donut Girl was playing games, making a point of greeting The Flake now that he didn't even want her with coffee. Smart cookie or pastry rather!

Why should he? They'd spent all his money, and even used up his antiques furnishing Airhead'n Breakfast Model Suites in Parkdale Mansions. Transforming a group-home for schizophrenics into a bed-and-breakfast for hipsters was a stroke of genius worthy of such cunts - and really no transformation at all....

*****

Late summer in PORKO'S STORE.

What used to be Johnny's. It hadn't closed after all. It had been RESTRUCTURED.

Romeo finally GOT RID OF JOHNNY. Porko repaid him for all those years of friendship by TAKING HIS JOB.

Johnny could overlook Porko's getting him committed to THING STREET ASYLUM just for laughs. But this was un-f-f-forgivable (to paraphrase Max the Butcher).

He even outdid him at hitting on customers....

*****

He was Leroy Dickerfiddle. He stayed in his bedroom for years at a time, briefly emerging at irregular intervals to eat or use the bathroom. And when he had to reboot his computer, or change the disks.

Romeo was sailing the high Arctic, watching polar bears slaughter cute baby seals for sport. The bear would tip an iceberg covered with them. The expression on some unfortunate seal's face as he slid toward doom!

Meanwhile Leroy's world shrank to the keyboard of his Commodore 64 (c) on which he was always typing typing. Leroy never heard the stories. He wouldn't have understood them anyway. He'd have asked too many questions. Did they really happen? Were there any witnesses?

Once Johnny asked Leroy if he'd heard the one about Romeo's first job on the ships. How Romeo and his friend, the notorious Jack-Was-Every-Inch-A-Sailor, got into a fight with an irritating drunk, bound him, and hung him over the side with the soles of his feet just skimming the waves. He writhed and shrieked, louder when it appeared they didn't know how to reel him in and left him dangling while they went to find the captain and confess.

They had a little problem....

No, Leroy admitted sulkily. He never told him.

Johnny did not go on to tell Leroy how it turned out. Romeo was handsome then, so when the Captain brought him to the office where his wife worked, she insisted that he not fire him. He was so young! Wasn't the Captain young once? Give these boys a chance!

He did. Which meant more stories.

Johnny would not have been able to ask, as he proceeded to do.

Had he heard the one about how, years later as Captain himself now, Romeo did virtually the same thing again, lowered an obnoxious man - in this case a psychotic who'd tried to strangle the cook - Jack! - not into the ocean but the custody of cops waiting on the dock.

He'd had to hit the man and knock him down. Unfortunately he'd struck his head when he fell and given himself a bad cut. The cops wanted to know why he hadn't kicked him too. When he was down. They proceeded to....

No, Leroy said. His father didn't tell him anything. We're there any witnesses?

How about the one about the time Romeo and his friends hi-jacked the Newfie Bullet....

The time back home between jobs when Romeo suddenly remembered the pubic school principal who threatened to throw him in the furnace for talking in class. He went to find him to killing because that was a terrible thing to do to a five year old but the principal was dead already.

Foul odors crept under Leroy's door. His wicked sisters wriggled their noses. They worried. Maybe Leroy was dead!

Romeo never worried about anything. Leroy worried about everything all the time.

He was worried about his inventions. That they wouldn't sell. That they wouldn't even work. His self-retrieving cane, for example. He knew from his occasional walks that the population was aging and that his generation represented a huge block of future dotards. He calculated that when the foetid wave crested and broke on the social littoral there would be an overwhelming demand for canes, crutches, and walkers of every sort in an apparent reversal of those first coelacanths that ventured onto land aeons ago. Those had fins; these had prostheses.

With a few noisy key-strokes on his commodore he calculated how many times in the onslaught canes and crutches were dropped, how many times some dotard stooped to retrieve them never to walk upright again.

He arrived at a figure in the millions! Millions of accidents, fatalities his invention would have prevented!

To retrieve the lost ashplant, the elder merely stomped on the tip which then bounced up for him to catch it.

Whether stomping and kicking weren't equally or more dangerous than bending, and whether the elder was sufficiently agile to catch his bouncing cane, he hadn't considered yet. He intended to stage a simulation in the near future, with Jack the Old Goat.

Then there was the Talking Dosette that reminded one to take his medications and activated an alarm when he didn't.

The intelligent shoe-laces programmed to tie themselves the moment you put them on. He felt that with a few minor adjustments they could be adapted for the U.S. prison system.

The butt-crack music-maker....[54]

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[54] Workman would have appreciated Leroy's ingenuity, being something of an inventor himself. After expressing his intention to present his new Hospitals (or "Homes") in "ornamental surroundings of shrubberies, flowers, and pleasant walks ... not unworthy the respect and imitation of other countries," consistent with his "earnest purpose to elevate the character of the Toronto Asylum" (1867, 40), he indulges his passion for lowly and unaesthetic matters of plumbing, heating, and ventilation. The ventilation of the "water-closets" is his peculiar hobby, mainly because he has invented his own system of it, "at once the cheapest, the simplest, and the most efficient in existence" (1867, 41). He describes it in detail:

> the insertion of a three-inch lead, or galvanised iron, air-tight tube, into the soil-pipe, below the pan, and three or four inches above the surface of the water in the goose-neck trap. This air-pipe is carried to the nearest chimney with good and constant draft. (1867, 41)

The beauty of his invention is that it effectively "converts the water-closet pan into a quasi tobacco-pipe bowl" (1867, 41). However, it will never be widely adopted, he cynically admits, "unless by persons of common sense; therefore its extension will not be very rapid" (1867, 41).

He discusses the new Griffith's Ventilators almost as circumstantially, complaining that in calm weather their heavy blades are "utterly useless, or a little worse," and in stormy weather a source of "internal congelation and increased consumption of fuel" (1867, 42). He concludes this section on the Hospitals with another detail of ornamentation, itself rather "ornamental":

> In the upper iron sash of each window is a hinged pane, with a proper fastener, to admit fresh air when wanted. The lower sash is of wood, and is hung with weights. It is easily raised. An ornamental iron guard is placed

Thing Street Asylum

The litnus fly-paper shorts....

The....

What are you doing in there? Amanda was pounding on the door.

I-I'm p-p-programming, he, said. He had recently developed a stammer that was triggered by stressful things. He found interruptions terribly stressful.

Come on, I wanna go shopping! For THINGS....
Shopping was one of Amanda's few pleasures, but since falling for Leroy she rarely got to do it. Last Christmas he'd taken her to the Free Samples counter at The Bay. He had her sample twenty perfumes. Then he ordered the sales girl to wrap the gleaming bottles.
Merry Christmas!

So one could scarcely imagine Amanda's astonishment when she saw the five-spot slide towards her under the door.
Go ahead, take it! Leroy hissed at her through the keyhole. Have fun!

Leroy was finishing a bomb!

*****

A man flies by, in a Cessna....
He lands on Thing Street and gets out, on a white charger. He notices Porko's interest and smiles.
Or was it the ugly lamp on the server, that he called out to him for the price of?
Twenty loonies!
He dismounts, tying his steed to a fire-hydrant.... Beside Alpo San's POMERANIAN with a fresh BRUSH-CUT, or a GIGANTIC SQUIRREL....
He enters....
Six feet tall. Lanky. T-shirt, shorts, sandals. Jet-black hair (dyed!), piercing blue eyes (contacts!). A voracious smile (dentures!)....
Deane!!!
Just passing by....
Porko at his most fetching.... Asking, if he needed help, if there was anything he could do, if there was anything he could get him....
Actually, he said, for just a moment like a charmingly confused LITTLE BOY, I'm looking for everything. I'm setting up an apartment.... Just flew in, from OUT WEST....
Porko said he just got a load of things, freshly delivered from the States....
Deane was most interested in his load. What he'd seen already was enough to WHET HIS APPETITE....
They investigated a box of stuff they dragged out of Romeo's back room.
The man tested a nice old Sunbeam toaster, with chrome finish and black bakelite trim. In a few minutes he had a whole box of tested items for Johnny to price: toaster, iron, a Radio Shack AM/FM mantle radio from the 70s in an imitation wood-grained cabinet....
Porko observed the man's rich definite hairline. Where the plains met the Rockies.... Where the razor stopped. Right above the neck of his black T-shirt. A promise of the thick dark pelt underneath....
Where twilight falls on the stump-lot....
Johnny would have dickered. Porko said 5 dollars. Each item. Let no one say he couldn't deal.
The man said he was already looking forward to listening to the radio while....
Jerking himself to sleep, Porko finished the thought.
Then Porko showed him a red arborite-topped kitchen table from the 50s, two typical vinyl-upholstered kitchen chairs from the same period, a set of four yellow plastic patio chairs.
He wanted them all....
With hardly any discussion, they came to terms....

---

before it. (1867, 42)

Workman dramatizes himself writing the Report for 1870 as if right "in the midst of a heavy wind and rain storm" (1870, 20), listening to the noise of these recently purchased "Griffiths ventilators" over the "hubbub" of the disturbed patients. The Asylum must sometimes have been a very disturbing place. As such it serves as a foil for Workman himself, its sane centre.

You don't happen to have some more chairs, do you? asked the nice man. Porko noticed the loose-fitting sandals, comfortable and expensive-looking.

Porko indicated a chair by a famous U.S. maker, Heywood-Wakefield. I have eight like that, he said. With metal legs, seats formed to fit your cheeks, half-moon shaped supports.

Really? said the man. Could he see them?

Certainly. Please step this way. Right into his little crypt....

Romeo's cellar was full of his girlfriends' undeliverable things. Things they bought at the start of their relationship as a substitute for sex or a downpayment. Then immediately abandoned as they realized....

There was no substitute for....

Romeo....

Pretending to watch the steps worn like antique salad bowls, Porko couldn't help noticing....

The hair grew thick on his calves, thinning over his ankles and DEANE'S FOOT....

Porko reached back and grabbed Deane's right leg, running his hand down his long shin. Silky and moist. It had been a hot day.

The man shuddered like a horse. But he didn't bolt.

Steady, he said.

What a full basement, Deane giggled.

A bit hot and stuffy, Porko apologized. Here, let me help you off with that shirt....

I'm at the U of Titz, the man said. Nervously making conversation as he held up his arms. Exposing hairy pits. Like bird nests....

Porko realized. This would be a cinch.

I just love university men, he said.

Pinching his nipples till they stood erect like sentries guarding a bush.... Red-faced and angry, from the taunts of pesky brats....

I'm a geologist, Deane babbled, as Porko opened his fly, releasing a third pap, enormous....

I suppose this means you'll want a deal, tweaking it hard for good measure.

On hands and knees. They romped.

Here a leg; there a foot.

Right there in Johnny's store. Where Johnny hadn't even been able to make a sale....

Triggering....

An alarm on the MBC....

A panic at Thing's Pork....

A mysterious PACKAGE....

Civil servants abandoning their word-processors. Queuing up along both sides of Wormslithery in raccoon-skin coats, orthopedic shoes....

A powder-blue Lincoln pulling up on the sidewalk, scattering them like penquins....

A gold-plated microphone protruding from a cracked window, wiggling at the throng like a beckoning penis....

Men frowning as a woman screams and faints while another fellates the media in the person of the Milquetoast Broadcasting Company's ace-in-the-hole reporter and sole proprietor....

Citizen Hearse....

Hello! Dmitri?

Hurry up and gimme the goods. I gotta go, before I come. I aint gone down on Crassus yet, all morning. I'm fulla shit....

Veni, Veni, Creator Spiritus!

*****

Citizen Hearse's so-called "interview" with the Dmitri of the TOStar about $CAMH's One Brave Night Fun Raiser was a disaster, embarrassing to read.

Despite his own and his DENTSUBos handlers' best efforts, he looked ridiculous when he compared his staying up all night to the lived experience of long-suffering survivors Butch and Max the Butcher.

He had absolutely zero insight into that to which he compares his vigil - Mental Hellness. He thought because Ulyanov once attempted suicide when his remittance was late because of a postal strike, because he (secretly) policed communities where everyone was CRAZY, and because of his vast criminal corporate enterprises on Thing Street etc., OF COURSE HE KNEW ALL ABOUT IT.

He could have stayed up all year if he'd wanted to, and still been totally benighted. In reality he didn't know that he didn't know the first, least thing. That MENTAL ILLNESS was Johnny's WAY OF LIFE!

Thing Street Asylum

If only he'd known that much about it, there would have been, as Trixie was wont to proclaim, EVERY REASON FOR HOPE - but he didn't - so there wasn't.

Actually he couldn't have cared less if he'd known.

He was really just peddling some rather unremarkable, indeed unmarketable pizza.

We gotta get some big outfits behind this Mental Hellness STUFF, he said.[55] Meaning his Handy Haven group homes and Shagburger franchises.
Meanwhile there was a SPECIAL PLACE IN HEAVEN for the TO Star but especially people like Dmitri....

*****

Emergency! Emergency!

The SHARKE had come to THING STREET! His nose hairs tickled. He turned the waters red already.....
He was making a KILLING!

Code White! But Donut Girl turned BLUE....

She'd always wanted to be a.... ZONCOLITE GIRL....

*****

5 to 3....

He recognizes Jah Lo See in the throng, in pharmacist's drag....

Marek Finkelburgher blows kisses from his table at the Flake....

Butch stumbles to the curb in a red snow suit shaking his cane at the low facades of crummy haberdasheries....

Lord Willingdon looks down from his all-male brothel in Heaven....

Mitzi and Citizen Hearse interrupt the supper-hour news....

The hot scoop about a mysterious package....

Adults stop eating long enough to watch them, agape....

Children make faces at the ho blowing a fat pig on T.V., and retch....
They know that one day they'll have to grow up and be whores, too....

Make way for -

Got any drugs on yuh? Demand two gorillas in Dadanian Customs drag.
Sir! The Chief hisses in a stage whisper. In official intercourse I expect to be treated kindly-gently.
You get much of the unofficial kind?

[55] The changes which C. K. Clarke's career describes, the collaboration of psychiatry with psychology, the dissemination of psychiatry into the community, through schools, clinics and general hospitals, and finally its nationalization in the form of the Mental Hygiene movement, represent for Clarke what he calls "emancipation from asylum life" (1140). Clarke stresses the greater experience this "emancipation" offers, but it is apparent that this emancipation for the doctor has other implications for his patients, as with this greater experience comes greater control and power over the patient's entire life, literally from birth to death. It amounts to the transformation of the "aloofness of psychiatrists shut up within the walls of custodial institutions" (1140), into a more outward-looking militancy as Clarke urges psychiatrists to become "aggressive leaders ready to show their mettle in a great cause" (1140). The following pieces dramatize how Clarke and his colleagues and successors attempt at once to enlarge and disguise his authority, emancipating it from the old asylum of brick and mortar and lunacy, and erecting in its place the "virtual asylum" of mental hygiene. Clarke's writings on the subject are intriguing, not just because of their depiction of his pivotal role in the process (the last of the "great" Asylum doctors, the first of the psychiatrists), but because of the divided allegiance, nominally to the Asylum and other institutions like it, but in reality to something that, intentionally or not, would eclipse it.

Sir! I wish you to know that I am the nexus of extensive intercourse of unofficial nature.
The thug regards him keenly for a moment, then extends his palm. Brother! Gimme five!

That's my Pa!

Something really spectacular!
By special line feed....

Niagara Falls!

Five minutes!

Our sponsor....
Zoncolite....
Brings y-....

The REALLY BIG SHOW!

It's....

Marmorash!

You and I and your whole rotten....

RADIO HOUR!

*****

Former Controller McCarthy invoked the (by now familiar) apocryphal man, a not so distant relative of Daniel Clark's "A" and "B," "found insane on the street today" (15), and whom the city had to pay for, whatever the law.[56]

The Provincial Secretary rather impatiently reminded the former Controller that it was the municipality of origin that had to pay. Controller McBride took advantage of the opportunity to defend his predecessor and reiterated his point.

The man on the street, who had "wandered in from Hamilton or London [or CHATHAM].... ," went straight to the Reception Hospital. The Provincial Secretary again denied this.

When McBride insisted that "ninety-nine per cent of them go to the Reception Hospital" (17), the Provincial Secretary accused him of "coming here and making a general statement that no one can check up or confirm" (17).

A colleague satirized McBride's exploitation of the apocryphal figure "who comes down from say Maypole City and comes to the Reception Hospital because with the excitement of the City he goes crazy" (17).

Irritated by their sarcasm, McBride asserted that "we are not going to build a hospital for the benefit of the Province of Ontario" (17).

*****

They boarded their carriage....

They embarked....

[56] In his 1891 Report, in typically paradigmatic fashion, Clark presents two cases, A and B, illustrating through comparison and contrast the strengths and weaknesses of the two modes or rather proceses of admission. Both A and B go mad in the street. The only difference in the two cases is that A is found by friends, B by a policeman. A's friends take him directly to the medical superintendent, papers are issued, and A is almost immediately admitted. B is arrested, conveyed to gaol, committed under warrant, brought before a magistrate, and committed again to gaol awaiting further examination by the gaol surgeon, the judge, and another doctor. Provided these find B insane, the papers are sent to the Provincial Secretary, who relays them to the Inspector of Asylums, who relays them to the Medical Superintendent, who eventually returns them to the Secretary. If everything by this time is still in order, a warrant of transfer is issued to a bailiff and the prisoner is finally admitted to the Asylum. Unfortunately for B, getting out is as difficult as getting in. While A may be released by the Superintendent "at five minutes notice" (9), B can only get out by virtue of the same power that committed him. As usual, the underlying argument appears to be for more discretionary powers for himself.

Thing Street Asylum

They were Pioneers....[57]

*****

By the 1930s the Asylum was schizophrenic in more ways than one.[58] Despite the implementation of some aspects of the "individual approach" to mental illness that C.K. Clarke had advocated before the war, many patients continue to find their treatment inadequately personal. The doctors reflect on and celebrate their history; the patients reflect on theirs -- mainly to deplore it. They also remember Workman (the institution's most famous doctor, Medical Superintendent from 1853 to 1875) -- not as the "Nestor of Canadian Alienists," but as "Fox and Goose"; they celebrate the Nursing School, as a school of literal "hard knocks"; they note the establishment of a Reception Hospital, but in the context of confinement in a gaol cell, recollected in the untranquil presence of an unsympathetic and abusive nurse; they use semantic arguments, but while the authorities use terms like "asylum," "hospital," "clinic," "reception hospital," "Poor Man's Sanatorium," etc., they see the Asylum at once less positively, and more inventively,[59] as a living tomb, an especially long drawn-out kind of

[57] Like C. K. Clarke himself, at least according to Cyril Greenland, Charles Kirk Clarke: A Pioneer of Canadian Psychiatry (Toronto: The Clarke Institute of Psychiatry, 1966). Most of the very few published articles on Workman are indeed of this ilk. For example, Cyril Greenland's predictably titled "Three Pioneers of Canadian Psychiatry," Journal of the American Medical Association 200.10 (June, 1967): 129-38. Greenland tells us several times that Workman was one of the "best loved physicians in all Canada" (835, 837) and connects Workman to the Clarke Institute for which the article appears to have been written on the occasion of the Canadian centennial. Greenland's examples of Workman's writing actually argue against his thesis, since they show Workman unchivalrously attacking his critics, calling Dorothy Dix's father a "paranoiac," etc. Scull's complaint about bad biography seems appropriate here: "useful ideological constructs for those bent on creating an idealized fiction as a support for their current professional identity" (Masters of Bedlam: The Transformation of the Mad-Doctoring Trade (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1996), 4. C.G. Stogdill's "Joseph Workman, M.D., 1805-1894: Alienist and Medical Teacher," Journal of the Canadian Medical Association 95:18 (1966): 917-23, is more informative and less gloating. Stodgill notes, for example, Workman's interesting and value-laden diagnoses. A more recent article by Peter J. Mitham, "`Very Truly and Undisturbedly Yours': Joseph Workman and a Verdict of Malpractice against John Galbraith Hyde," Canadian Bulletin of Medical History 13 (1996): 139-49, discusses several letters in which Workman supports a fellow-doctor involved in a malpractice suit.

[58] The Medical Superintendents during this period were the following: Dr. J.M. Forster, 1911-1920; Dr. Harvey Clare, 1920-1925; Dr. F.S. Vrooman, 1925-1928; Dr. H.A. McKay, 1928-1930. By 1922 it had become clear that the Queen Street institution could not be closed. In 1923 a series of long-delayed improvements began, including (finally!) the installation of a new steam-heating system and improved hydrotherapeutic appliances. In 1924 Salvarsan was introduced to treat patients suffering from general paresis, and malarial treatment was started in 1933. Other more "heroic" therapies, like shock therapy using metrazol or insulin, were introduced in 1938 for the treatment of schizophrenia. Electroshock was not introduced till 1943. See Gifford Price, A History of the Ontario Hospital Toronto, Master of Social Work Thesis, School of Social Work, University of Toronto, 1950, p. 97-100.

[59] Porter states that while some 17th-century writers were generally not interested in "the physical but in the metaphysical nature of the madhouse," 18th-century writers were increasingly "dominated by one exceedingly tangible presence: notably, the madhouse, a totally secular institution" (269). Writers like Miss Adams and Miss Stein found some degree of "paradox" in the nature of asylum life, but rooted in the emotionally charged routines of an oppressively material building. Not just for the record, I cannot recall a single patient or inmate writer who was unequivocally positive about the Toronto Asylum. Occasionally a writer writes something good about it to a relative or a doctor, but this invariably seems to be motivated by a desire to appear "well" -- and to get out faster.

Mr. Jones was such a writer. He was admitted in 1910 with a morphine addiction. Others compared the Asylum to a hotel (a bad one), but he makes it resemble a spa or a modern fitness club, as he describes his improved physical condition and boasts that "I am forty inches around the chest, and have a fourteen-inch bicepts. I have taken a general course of physical culture ever since coming here, and am in the pink of condition." His assertions that "I have got ambition" and "I have that habit of mine beaten so far that you can't see it," his promise that "I am going to `made good'," and his off-hand dismissal of the place where is as "this old bug-house," are probably all part of that unconvincing "plausibility" that the doctors remarked. On the one hand he seems to elevate the place, and on the other to dismiss it entirely. Perhaps he cannot make up his mind, or perhaps he cannot really admit to his correspondent any more than to himself what it really is -- and that it is not so easily dismissed. His assertion that "I guess I could leave about any time now, but I want to go on a little further with my music," as if the Asylum were his conservatory, rings similary false -- a denial of the terms of his confinement there. Is it all a fiction? The hope that "I will some day be dropping in to hit you for a job" seems no more realistic. It resembles the "career ambitions" of Miss Adams, above.

In a letter to Dr. Clarke dated February 2, 1911 he seems to have lost his parole yet again and writes to have it back again "in the afternoon. I am in fairly good condition again and I would like to be able to go out on the ice for the remainder of the season." He claims to have altered his view of the Asylum:

> I believe that my little hysterical attack of a few weeks ago was about the best thing that ever happened to me -- taking "dope" and all – for it made me absolutely disgusted with myself .... I have had more confidence in myself than I ever had before, in regard to conquering the "dope," and also, I have considerably moderated my point of view regarding this Asylum. Heretofore I have always thought -- "How long do the girls want me to stay?" Now the question is -- "How long ought I to stay?" -- and the answer with me now is -- "until I am well."

The letter develops his "fiction" that at the Asylum he will learn enough about music to undertake a new career, and indeed that he is only staying in the Asylum to learn more about music: "Also I have become ambitious to be a musician, and I do not think I could have any better opportunity than I have here." He reverts to his characteristic quotation marks to set off an especially plausible maxim, as he asserts that the sexual problems he earlier expressed are now under control: "I think I have settled that for all time -- `as a man thinks, so is he'." Again, he probably protests too much when he assures Clarke that "I am not trying to `taffy' you for my parole, but am trying to give you the results of my late `bust'." And again quotation marks surround his too plausible explanation, his too simple and easy solutions:

> my conclusion of the whole matter is simply "that if a fellow trys [sic] for all that is in him to do what is right, and keeps his thoughts entirely away from that which is injurious (women, dope, etc.) nature will give him back the mental and nervous poise he has lost."

murder, a fourth-rate hotel run by sadistic scullery maids, a brothel for Government Bonded White Slaves, Ontario Hospital Hell, etc. Parallel lines never meet, however often they appear to come to a point.

*****

At the INSTALLATION of C.K. Sharke, Benefactor of Madkind, Fellow of the Royal Society of Shrink Screws, as GENGHIS KAHN the THOUSAND-EYED....

The TRANSFORMATION of THING STREET into.... White Squirrel Way!

As Trixie Zane, in a scarlet cocktail dress, blows a giant mushroom cloud-shaped tart, to the strains of Sursum Corda swelling behind the Vitaphone Orchestra murdering Maw Rainey's Black Bottom....

The Flake Boutique Motel! Thing Street's Premier Resort for Rich Old Pervs in Tilley Endurables....
Proud (recent) OCAD Grad Employer.... Which eliminated Trixie, who earned her diploma in Prostitution Studies not very recently....
Jeff Stober helped $CAMH Transform the Neighborhood into a sterile Fascist Ghetto....
Then marketed it as funky Bohemia....
A Waste Land! Boutique hotels! Boutique mental hospitals....
He destroyed the soul of the whole block, congratulated himself on the transformation and interrupted Trixie Zane's dance routine to buy her a drink....
Grabbing the bottle and guzzling half of it....
Philistine? Wasn't he a shrink?

Outside the choppers tearing up the pavement the old homos SQUEALING and the hipsters pleading for mercy only HARDER next time....

Finkelburgher!

*****

Workman's notions of disease reflected, as much as any strictly pathological phenomena, the heroic role that he created for the physician and for himself especially, the amount of material support that he believed such a role required, and the inadequate institutional support for such a role in 19th-century North America and especially at the Toronto Asylum. The transition from a heroic period of building to a pessimistic period of compromise and accommodation was reflected in constructions of disease focussed on the Asylum itself. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the Asylum had become not unlike the hereditary "diathesis" of contemporary etiological thought.[60]

Workman's language, no less monumental and (at times) obsolete, nevertheless helps us to understand one phase in the discourse of madness. Without it we probably cannot hope to understand the whole or know where we are with our own discourse. Workman does not seem to have fully appreciated where he was with his, until it became a dead end. This alone would make him instructive, worth reading. It is widely accepted that madness has been silenced from about the middle of the 17th century, but the effect of this silence on the authorities -- on the lop-sided and misshapen discourse that remained -- is still imperfectly understood. Reading Workman's texts helps us to understand what happened.

Finally, the thesis that Workman approached mental illness as an essentially physiological disorder, or that he "dismissed the long list of supposed `moral' agencies to which asylum superintendents in the early part of the nineteenth century had assigned causal primacy,"[61] appears to be largely based on uncritical assessments of Workman's own unself-critical pronouncements about what he thought he was doing. It should be revised or at least reconsidered in the light of

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In his letter to Dr. Stead of April 21, 1911 he attempts to ingratiate himself with the latter by letting him into what he terms "a deep dar-r-rk secret," that the lessons he has in mind are vocal. While ostensibly saying something "good" about the patients, he subtly distinguishes himself from them. "They" may be "nutty," but not enough to stand for his taking singing lessons in the ward. He does not say "we." He boasts that "Damon and Pythias will be a pair of `also-rans' alongside of the Professor and me" and that "I will stick to him like a leech." He eloped on June 2 1911 and was "written off" by Dr. Forster on July 3.

[60] For a good discussion of the kind of thought prevalent among late nineteenth-century medical superintendents, see S.E.D. Shortt, Victorian Lunacy: Richard M. Bucke and the Practice of Late Nineteenth-Century Psychiatry (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986), especially chapter 4, "Genesis of Etiological Speculation," 94-123. He suggests that Bucke and his contemporaries (who certainly included Daniel Clark) "had pragmatic professional motives for enthusiastically endorsing degeneration as an etiological reality," principally because it "substantiated the somatic model of mental illness": "The existence of a hereditary neuropathic diathesis, usddenly made overt by situational stress or vice, provided an important explanation for the manner in which these functional deficits operated" (104). It would also have got them off the hook for the failure of moral therapy or, as Shortt more elegantly puts it, "the depressing decline in cure rates in late nineteenth-century asylums" (104).

how, in Workman's texts, even such causes appear to have been motivated. Most of the diseases discussed above are in complicity with the social arrangements intended to address them, with the doctor, and with language. This tends to refute those historians still addicted to the hagiographic "great man/pioneer" school of medical history, to whom the notion that a medical doctor is not necessarily more rational and objective than anyone else amounts to apostasy.[62] Yet despite the interestedness of Workman's presentation of "diseases" like masturbation, paresis, and moral mania, respectable historians[63] still tend to exempt him from the application of arguments like Andrew Scull's in Museums of Madness,[64] Constance M. McGovern's in Master's of Madness: Social Origins of the American Psychiatric Profession,[65] and Ellen Dwyer's in Homes for the Mad: Life Inside Two Nineteenth-Century Asylums.[66]

While there appears to have been a discrepancy between what Workman thought he was doing and what he really did, he thought less of what he did all the time. Very late in his life he translates part of one Professor Tebaldi's Ragione e Pazzia, a masque-like satire of doctors' arrogant assumption that they can identify the physiological origins of insanity.[67] The subject of this post-mortem is a strikingly female personification standing for a range of things including genius, inspiration, and the soul. The post-mortem itself is a self-important search for truth where it cannot be found. Today Workman might inspire us to seek it in language, or not at all.

*****

Deane trained me on my second shift, although he normally didn't work nights. I'm afraid the regular night guy had already had enough of me after one session. As always Deane was the one to step in and help me out. I was totally overwhelmed by my new job, but Deane's calm manner and sense of humor pulled me through.

Deane subsequently became what I most looked forward to about the House. Because I lived (and still live, alas) right next door, some mornings I would even wait on the front steps just to see him arrive, I got such a kick out of him. I'm sure he found me very annoying. I looked forward to him every day, even when he was on vacation. I was only waiting to see him again.

I knew at the time that this kind of dependency was dangerous, and now I suppose I'm paying the price, because it looks like I'll be waiting for Deane forever, with his smart looking car, his young attire (always running shoes, shorts or jeans, a long-sleeved brightly-covered shirt over a T-shirt) and the "Roots" bag slung over his shoulder, the master key dangling from it on a strap.

These things happen. I suppose the price of knowing someone as nice as Deane is that you might lose him. Inevitably, maybe. I suppose we all pay that price in different ways. I've had to pay it by quitting, because while I know I'll probably always miss Deane and wait for him too, it would just be too painful to miss and wait for him there, with traces of the man but not, of course, Deane.

The last time I saw Deane was Friday night. I'd come to take a few tenants to the museum. On Friday admission to the galleries was free after 4:30 P.M. I'd promised Amanda that we'd visit the Egyptian section. We were disappointed to find that it was closed for renovation, but at least there were a few caskets on display under the rotunda. Amanda wasn't that enthusiastic about them. Her bum was sore. Their displays were pale compared to her

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[61] Thomas Edward Brown, "Living with God's Afflicted": A History of the Provincial Lunatic Asylum at Toronto (Queen's University, Kingston: Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, 1981).

[62] Most of the very few published articles on Workman are indeed of this ilk. For example, Cyril Greenland's predictably titled "Three Pioneers of Canadian Psychiatry," Journal of the American Medical Association 200.10 (June, 1967): 129-38. Greenland tells us several times that Workman was one of the "best loved physicians in all Canada" (835, 837) and connects Workman to the Clarke Institute for which the article appears to have been written on the occasion of the Canadian centennial. Greenland's examples of Workman's writing actually argue against his thesis, since they show Workman unchivalrously attacking his critics, calling Dorothy Dix's father a "paranoiac," etc. Scull's complaint about bad biography seems appropriate here: "useful ideological constructs for those bent on creating an idealized fiction as a support for their current professional identity" (Masters of Bedlam: The Transformation of the Mad-Doctoring Trade (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1996), 4. C.G. Stogdill's "Joseph Workman, M.D., 1805-1894: Alienist and Medical Teacher," Journal of the Canadian Medical Association 95:18 (1966): 917-23, is more informative and less gloating. Stodgill notes, for example, Workman's interesting and value-laden diagnoses. A more recent article by Peter J. Mitham, "`Very Truly and Undisturbedly Yours': Joseph Workman and a Verdict of Malpractice against John Galbraith Hyde," Canadian Bulletin of Medical History 13 (1996): 139-49, discusses several letters in which Workman supports a fellow-doctor involved in a malpractice suit.

[63] For example, Rainer Baehre, "Joseph Workman and Lunacy Reform: Humanitarian or Moral Entrepreneur?" (Paper presented to the Canadian Historical Society: Montreal, 1980). Baehre comes down hard on the "humanitarian" side, though the division now seems like a false one.

[64] See Andrew T. Scull, Museums of Madness: The social Organization of Insanity in Nineteenth-Century England (London: Allen Lane, 1979). Scull offers strong evidence for one of his principal theses, that "there was on obvious link between how serious a problem insanity perceived to be, and the importance and prestige bestowed upon those thought to be experts in its treatment" (238).

[65] Constance M. McGovern, Masters of Madness: Social Origins of the American Psychiatric Profession (Hanover, New Hampshire: UP of New England, 1985). See especially her chapter, "Selling the Profession," 127-48.

[66] Ellen Dwyer, Homes for the Mad: Life Inside Two Nineteenth-Century Asylums (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers UP, 1987). See for example "The Economics of Compassion," 29-54.

[67] In Canada Lancet 22.2 (October, 1889): 33-6. The question Workman translates from Tebaldi's Ragione e Pazzia dogged him throughout his carrer: "Do we find in the organic changes of our subjects any which may account for the numerous and varied forms of mental disorders?" "La Pazzia" answers cryptically, if at all: "You know who I am, and you will well remember that, whilst I was your clinical guest, you made a world of enquiries in order to know me thoroughly" (33).

every day delusions. Leon was impressed by the guns. They were so beautiful. He thought of the hours it took someone to make them. Afterwards we went to McDonald's. Everyone liked that part.

Deane was working in the kitchen (as usual). I went in to talk to him for a few minutes and he serenaded me with the theme music from "Rawhide," the lyrics suitably altered: "Rowland, Rowland, Rowland, etc." Typical Deane. One of the tenants I was escorting wanted him to save her a steak (he'd done them on the barbecue that night). Deane agreed. On the way upstairs she reminded him that he was supposed to take her shopping on Monday. Shopping with Deane was one of their great joys, and mine too. She also reminded him that she wanted to buy some underwear at Wal-Mart. When I told her she should get them at Dollarama, where I got mine, Deane said that was why every time I farted I blew out the seat of my pants. More typical Deane. Deane had the worst gas of anyone I know.

Deane had a lot of problems. I knew he was having a hard time. I know that he and his wife had recently come through a lot of financial difficulties. I know that his parents were ill, and I know that he was ill himself, with chronic pain. I know too that he had a very hard job, with tenants and staff alike making a lot of physical and emotional demands on him. Deane was always the one to do extra work, to be extra kind and solicitous.

I only had one quarrel with Deane, and naturally it was a bad one. I still feel bad about it. Deane could be stubborn, and so could I. Now I think I have another, even more unreasonable of me, which is that he didn't say good-bye. We had one conversation about suicide, which is when he told me he had a little gun. I told him if he ever really felt that way, to come to tell me and I'd go with him. Maybe that's why. He probably had very different things on his mind.

Deane stole our clients' lorazapan in order to relax. He borrowed their pin money and never paid it back. He drove a schoolbus on the side and never admitted why he called in sick. He dropped a stitch in everyone's delusional fabric. And never picked it up....

Deane was wonderful. Sometimes there's nothing like stating the obvious.

*****

Through boiling cloud-banks of pollution from the fat-fryers of Fowl Murder Franchises....

Between the massive blue buttocks of Hogtown's finest, in parade formation....

Direct from PORKO'S STORE (what used to be Johnny's)....

An exceptionally fat and dumpy flaneur...

Max holding the special delivery package gingerly.... With ghostly, devoted fingers....

For the first time ever....

Opening it nervously....

In a roaring flash....

A blinding hail....

Like paper scraps....

Exploding in his
FACE....

Like wings....

Like fins...

Doesn't it beat....

A turbine.....

A propeller....

Like a billion flailing hands....

Under a

white cataract....

On the Zsa Zsa Special
remnants of an old, green antimacassar....

Citrus green....

Someone....

(Sorry to do this to you, JOHNNY!)

Beside(s) himself....

*****

Gee, but we had some swell times though!

*****

Avanti Signori!

*****

O roar again....

*****

Nelligan!

*****

He was....

*****

A disaster for the aerospace program....

*****

Terribe, terrible tragedy....

*****

GARBAGE NIGHT.....

*****

This woman has been burned!

*****

The meat was BURNING!

*****

He sat on the organ....

Pioneers of Alienation

*****

ISTANBUL![68]

About the Author

Jon Thomas Rowland was born in Chatham, Ontario in 1956. He eloped from the unsustainable developments of parents and siblings (especially the latter) to purloin a B.A. and M.A. from the University of Toronto, and a Ph.D. (on 18th-century self-pollution) from the University of Montreal.

He was a white slave at the World's Worst English Department at (where else) the University of Toronto from 1993 to 1995.

His thesis was published by the University of Delaware Press in 1994 as Faint Praise and Civil Leer: The Decline of 18th-Century Panegyric. His study of the meanings of homosexuality in obscure 18th-century texts was published by the Fairleigh Dickinson University Press in 1998 ("Big Hairy" Kayeshian regretted it ever after, which unfortunately didn't prevent him from stealing it).

Never obtaining tenure or a real job, the poor fuck worked in shelters and group-homes for mad people in Toronto Canada (Hog[g]town to residents). This experience, and his appreciation of 18th-century masturbators and their 20th-century rivals Celine and Burroughs, have infected his view of the world. He lives in Parkdale Toronto, and writes.

"She, for one, fervently thanked god
for her sanity."

[68] Park, Workman, Daniel Clark, C.K. Clarke, et al. created among themselves a new kind of "hieratic" authority at once highly textual and, at least ostensibly, referential. This volatile and indeed almost paradoxical combination can probably only be accounted for with reference to the many silenced -- or unheeded -- mad. The elements of this authority ultimately prove incompatible. The "references" are always unpredictable. They do not support the texts in anticipated ways, and the mad themselves too often seem merely incidental to arguments made on their behalf.

Their authority is also peculiarly spacial, bound up with the Asylum building itself, with all its brick and mortar, perennial practical problems of heating, plumbing, and ventilation -- and patients. One of the problems for this authority as it endeavours to remove itself from its physical shell, is its unseemly nakedness as it leaves its carapace behind.

From these texts it is hard not to suppose that "Hogtown" is incurable partly because it is in no one's interest to cure it. They invent diseases and make them epidemic; at the same time they allow, to borrow C.K. Clarke's phrase, a "terra incognita" of hardship and mental suffering to flourish, by barely acknowledging its existence, and refusing to learn its language. Despite Clarke's grand designs, the real Asylum -- his, Workman's, Daniel Clark's and ours -- continues to exist. It comes between them as palpably as a continent, more real than ever, as their "virtual asylum" becomes Byzantium, constructed of language over a city always a lot closer to Hell than Heaven.

Thing Street Asylum

